

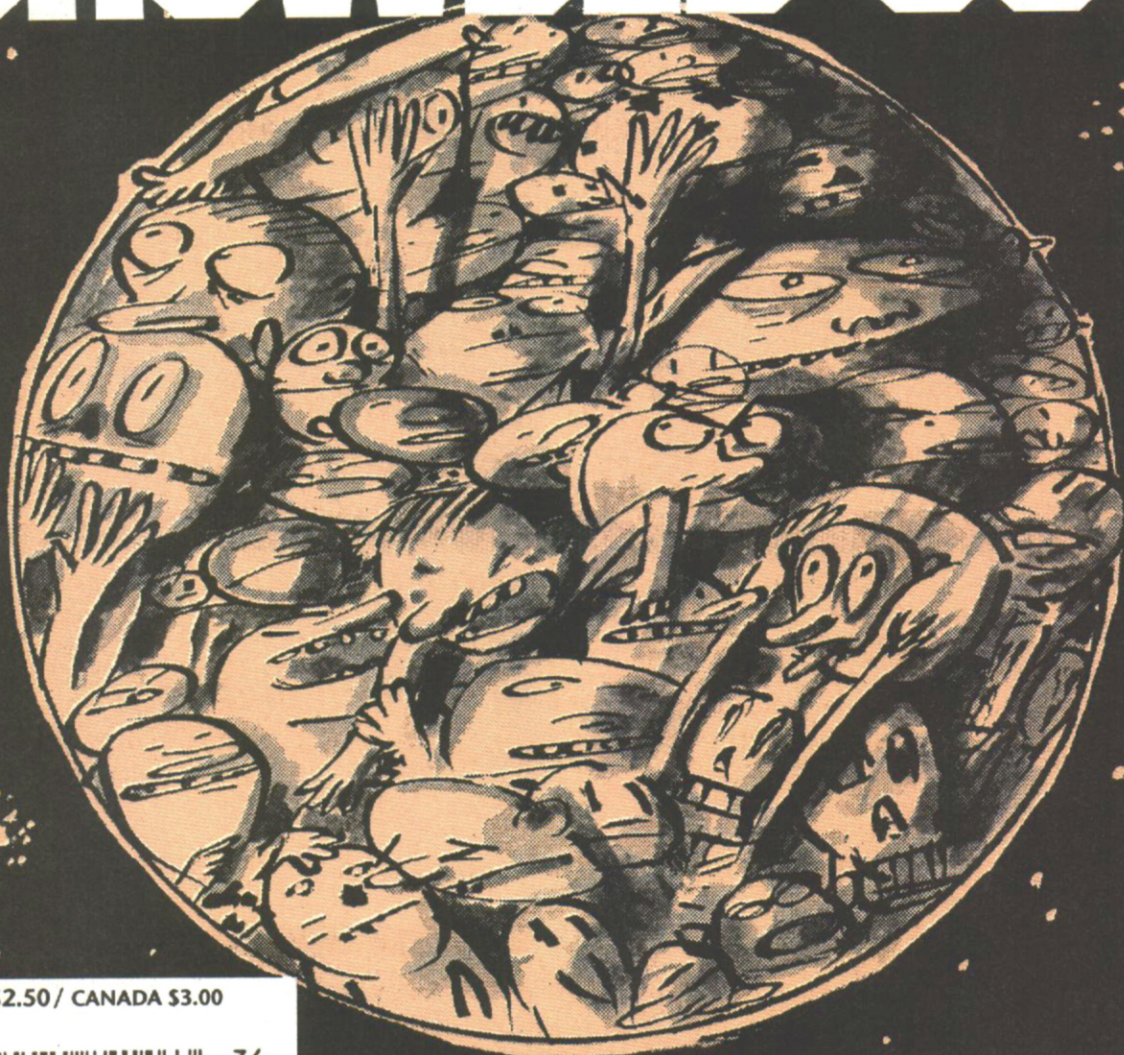
TOP STORY: ED GARVEY ON THE BASEBALL STRIKE

September 5 - 18, 1994

# IN THESE TIMES

the alternative newsmagazine

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**The case for population control** By Will Nixon, page 14



# EDITORIAL

## CUBANS NEED HELP, NOT PUNISHMENT

**A**fter decades of U.S. special treatment for Cubans seeking refuge from economic or political conditions at home, President Clinton is now condemning Fidel Castro for encouraging Cuban citizens to leave. Announcing a series of measures designed to "punish" the Cuban president for the latest influx of exiles, Clinton tried to appear decisive by talking tough. Pushed, as usual, by immediate events, he threatened actions that contradicted his stated goals.

Wanting to stop the flow of refugees, he imposed greater hardships on Cubans, which can only increase their incentive to leave. He banned remittances of dollars by relatives in the United States. He threatened to tighten the embargo. Claiming to promote democracy in Cuba, he ordered escalation of Radio Marti broadcasts, a move that will only prompt Castro to tighten controls on free expression.

Rep. Robert G. Torricelli (D-NJ), a Cuba hawk, tacitly acknowledged the administration's moral and political bankruptcy. "It is impossible to bring fundamental political change to Cuba without doing damage to people who live on the island," he said. But that didn't phase Clinton's chief of staff Leon Panetta. He warned that the administration would consider a blockade of the island if Castro did not take "meaningful" steps toward democracy. (He backed off a few hours later, after conceding that a blockade would face strong opposition in Latin America.)

The overall impression is of an administration devoid of constructive policy, flailing about in response to immediate events and gravitating naturally to the most bellicose rhetoric of the Cold War. Meanwhile, confusion reigns. Consider this gem of clear thinking from a State Department official: "Castro's refusal to do anything to try to put his economy back in order has gotten Cuba to the point where things are so perilous that additional sanctions like [those Clinton threatens] may make them face the fact that they have to do something different in terms of reform."

Cuba's economy is in a mess. No one would dispute that. But there are several reasons for its problems, not the least of which is the U.S. embargo on trade with the island,

imposed in 1961 at the very end of the Eisenhower administration. This policy not only stopped U.S. firms from doing business on the island, but imposed sanctions against other nations that traded with Cuba.

The idea then, and in most of the succeeding administrations, was to bankrupt the island and foment counterrevolution. Instead, it forced Castro into the arms of the Soviet Union and into the center of the Cold War. Yet despite everything Washington could do, including many botched assassination attempts by the CIA, Castro survived and is supported by most inhabitants of the island.

Now, with Soviet support gone and the economy in a shambles, Castro is more open than ever to normalization of relations with

the United States. Contrary to the State Department view, he has made many changes designed to "put his economy back in order." (See *In These Times*, August 8.) Some have been painful for advocates of a centralized state economy, including acceptance of foreign investment for a dollar-based tourist industry. Even so, Clinton seems intent on preventing Castro from putting his house in order until after he agrees to follow U.S. dictates.

The talk in Washington is about democracy, but the administration's actions can only decrease the possibility of relaxed controls in Cuba, both economic and political. The

***Clinton  
administration  
responses to the  
latest refugee  
wave can only  
prolong the  
crisis and make  
things worse for  
the Cuban  
people.***

more difficult economic conditions are in Cuba, the more Castro will feel the need for stringent restrictions on dissent. The more hostile the threats from the outside, the greater the likelihood of responses in kind. The less trade, open communications and travel, the smaller the chance of a peaceful transition to a more mixed economy and democratic reforms.

By now it should be clear that Castro cannot be overthrown through hostile action. He is willing to open Cuba to normal diplomatic and trade relations. That may strengthen him or weaken him, but it is the only way that the Cuban people will be allowed freely to move toward a more representative democracy and a more comfortable life. If we had an administration that acted on principle instead of narrow, short-term expediency, it would accept Cuba on the same terms as it does other nations.

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 "...with liberty and justice for all"

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# LETTERS

## Classless

Two items (*ITT*, June 13), taken together, illustrate a chronic dilemma for the U.S. socialist left. In her article "Identity crisis," Ellen Meiksins Wood addressed the need for a program to unify the left. In his letter "God rest ye Marxist-Leninists," William J. Volont derided the follies of the Marxist-Leninist Party, U.S.A (MLP). The first calls for an ideology yet to be articulated; the second mocks an ideology grotesquely articulated. Between the longed-for emergent ideology and the ridiculous outmoded ideology, we get nowhere.

Wood does a fine job of illuminating the left's present condition: capitalism no longer really questioned; class is either not perceived as such or else is levelled with identity issues; our effectiveness thereby dissipated. She discerns, all the same, the possibility that a unifying ideology will crystallize out of the objective situation. Her ideology

would begin from the ubiquity of class relations, the "totalizing" influence of capital in our lives. However, Wood does not yet have a program to offer, and that's the chronic trouble. Ever since the New Left rejected the dogmatism of the Old Left, it has been glimpsing an ideology that keeps receding like the horizon. In the '60s there was euphoric certainty that the supposedly emerging ideology would carry the day when it unified all of that revolutionary diversity. But it never emerged. In 1994, with the left's identity in permanent crisis, Wood is doggedly determined to remain hopeful for the same emergence, though she would probably disdain the word "ideology."

Of course, I find the MLP's Albanian gambit as abhorrent as does Volont, and would laugh as hard as he does if their rhetoric didn't have such dreadful resonances. Nearly all of us see the MLP as a decrepit caricature of

the Old Left (which often enough caricatured itself). And that's just the trouble. It seems as if any actual ideological program degenerates into dogma, in our eyes. Some of us adhere to socialist factions, but most of us don't, and all of us find the other person's manifesto inadequate and usually a little contemptible. As persuasive as Wood's prologue to an ideology is, her own agenda would or will fare no better. Meanwhile, we seem condemned to the ineffectual polarity between vagueness and narrowness that Wood decries—but in her own way typifies.

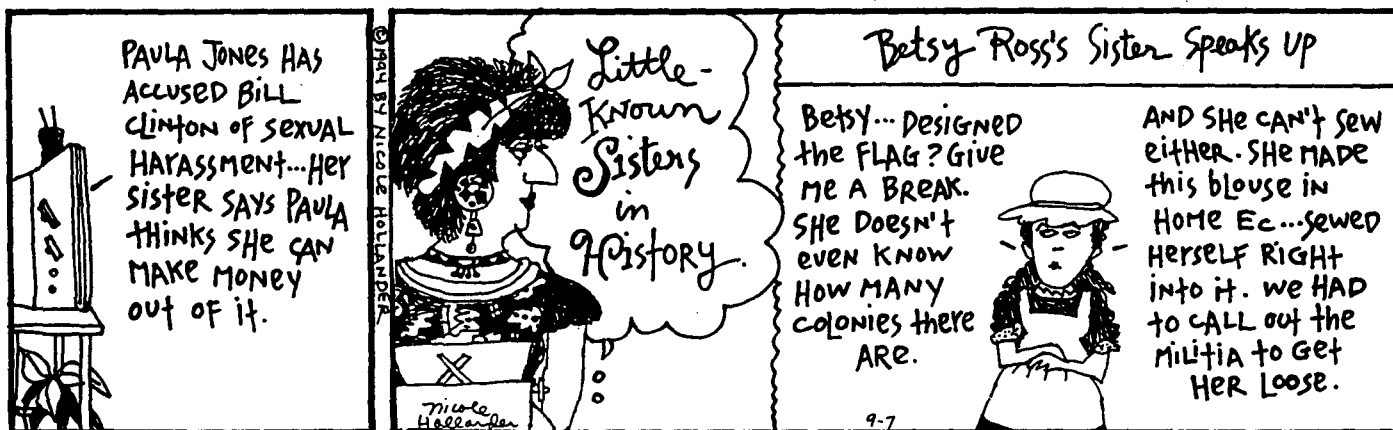
I won't attempt a solution. I'm only a sentimental socialist, waiting inconspicuously, like many others, to be won over by someone's brilliant alternative. But I would like to comment on Wood's tactical emphasis on class.

Just as in the '60s, but more obviously so, we socialists-by-inclination are only a fraction of the left. For that reason, if no other, class relations won't be a galvanizing issue. The "total" perniciousness of capitalism will have to be pulled along by other issues. And in that regard, Wood is wrong to group all other issues as less than total. There are two issues, intimately related to each other, whose total impact on the planet will eventually be lost on no one: overpopulation and environmental degradation. When these issues become urgent, they will have a chance to excite widespread criticism of the economic system.

Anthony Shafton  
Chicago

SYLVIA

by Nicole Hollander



## Class interest

Ellen Meiksins Wood's "Identity crisis" (*ITT*, June 13) is the most brilliant essay I have seen on the evaporation of socialism and class analysis in recent years. And it is all the more valuable because of its brevity.

I am compelled to be briefer still. "Real" socialism, in terms of political relevance, is dead. (Of course, millions of people do believe that the dead can be resurrected in gloriously revived form.) The distinctive Marxist heritage can only be relevant in keeping its critical intellectual "edge." Politically, its contribution, for now, is "radical democracy," grass-rooted democratic accountability, self-criticism and keeping alive the humanist, universalist faith that inspired Marx & Co., against the rising tide of fragmented "primordialism" and "authenticism." Wood asks "what is [radical democracy's] political objective?" Social democracy, of course, which, by definition, does not fundamentally challenge capitalism. But even '60s social democracy seems an impossible dream under today's fragile but aggressive capitalism.

I am forced to be even more pessimistic than Wood because I have one analytical difference with her. She, in classically Marxist form, seems to imply that, on economic grounds alone, there is a common, objective class interest that unites most of society against the small minority of big capital. This was a great, positive, energizing myth, but I don't believe it was ever accurate economically—never mind the culture, gender, etc., considerations that she keeps in mind.

Robert St. Cyr  
Greenlawn, N.Y.

## Confusion

Joel Bleifuss (*ITT*, August 8) spends so much of his time looking for hobgoblins under beds that I am surprised the poor little fellow finds the hours to do any work. Many of us were amused to read about how Paul

Weyrich is "pioneering the frontier of electronic organizing with a closed-circuit satellite television network, National Empowerment Television (NET), which allows far-right groups to organize and exchange information through teleconferences."

The "closed-circuits" here seem to be in Bleifuss' mind. In fact, NET is available to anyone who wishes to watch, via satellite and many cable systems around the country. Our Accuracy in Media program, "The Other Side of the Story," is seen by thousands of people each Wednesday evening via cable and satellite—and not via closed-circuit. I suggest that Bleifuss confuses NET with another Weyrich TV undertaking—but I shan't do the man's reporting for him.

Joseph C. Goulden  
Director of Media Analysis  
Accuracy in Media  
Washington

*Joel Bleifuss responds: Like all the propaganda put out by Accuracy in Media, Goulden's assertions contain a kernel of truth. Here are the facts: Paul Weyrich established NET in 1991 as a closed-circuit, interactive network that was accessible only to specially equipped televisions that were hooked up to satellite dishes. As Goulden points out, NET has since expanded by adding 24-hour cable/satellite capability to its electronic repertoire that is accessible to the public. If the closed-circuit portion of Weyrich's network now goes under a different name, that is news and I appreciate the tip. Stay tuned.*

## Ban the bomb

Thank you for your anti-nuclear editorial (*ITT*, July 25). We the undersigned U.S. Army veterans request that your readers join the Article Nine Society.

Article Nine of Japan's Constitution renounces war. The founder of the Article Nine Society, Charles Overby,

an engineer and Air Force veteran, has made three trips to Japan in the last two years to speak to several dozen groups of peace activists who passionately support their Article Nine. A full-page ad supporting our aims recently appeared in the *Christian Science Monitor*.

Our purpose in the United States is to take action by writing letters to help Japan keep the article, and by encouraging other nations to adopt a similar article.

Clifford McCarthy and  
Robert H. Whealey  
Athens, Ohio

For information, write to: Hiroshi Katsumori, The Article Nine Society, 9-13, Ishiodai, 2-Chrome Kasugai, Aichi 487 Japan, or Charles Overby, Ph.D., The Article Nine Society, P.O. Box 5564, Athens, Ohio 45701-5564.

## Sorry

My apologies to Leora Tanenbaum for charging that she did not check C.H. Sommers' attribution of the false anorexia morbidity figure to Naomi Wolf. (See "Letters," August 22.) Here's what happened: I first encountered Sommers' allegations in a reprinting of the preface to her book in the July 1994 *National Review*. I didn't remember seeing the figure in Wolf, so I went to Sommers' book to check the reference: Doubleday Edition, 1992, pp. 180-182. I had that edition; the figure did not appear on the pages cited. As it turns out, Wolf had corrected the error, at Sommers' behest, somewhere between the first and eighth printings of the edition. The paragraph from Sommers' book in which she reluctantly acknowledges Wolf's integrity on this point was, interestingly, omitted from the *Review's* excerpt.

Louise M. Antony  
Chapel Hill, N.C.



# InSHORT

## ADVANCEMENT?

**T**he National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) looked at its future and flinched. The Rev. Benjamin F. Chavis Jr., the group's recently ousted executive director, for all his alleged faults, represented the next chapter in African-Americans' freedom narrative. And although he'll have to change venues, the 46-year-old Chavis may yet fulfill that role.

A foolish indiscretion—Chavis' unreported commitment of \$332,400 to settle a sexual harassment complaint—provided the pretext for his ouster from the nation's oldest civil rights organization. But the fundamental reason for his firing was political, not personal.



©DAVID SCHULZ

Since he assumed leadership in April 1993, Chavis has been rocking the boat of the nation's oldest civil rights organization. That's why he was picked in the first place. After years of denial, the group's leaders finally responded to longstanding complaints that the NAACP had become irrelevant to contemporary concerns. Perhaps they were convinced by a 1993 *Detroit News and Free Press* poll, which found that the NAACP was seen by overwhelming numbers of blacks as being "out of touch" with the most crucial issues affecting them.

Chavis immediately sought to expand the group's purview. He forged connections with the street gang truce movement, even as his more traditional colleagues recoiled in disgust. He has made common cause with groups fighting for gay rights and those, such as the Nation of Islam (NOI), that believe homosexuality is divinely prohibited.

He convened an unprecedented meeting with a diverse group of black intellectual radicals, a segment of the African-American community that has been alienated from the NAACP since the group ousted the late W.E.B. Du Bois in 1948. Chavis had been trying to reignite the defiant spirit that meant so much



By Woody Igou

## Dumb—or worse

An FBI investigation has concluded that 1986 and 1991 CIA polygraph tests given to accused spy Aldrich Ames detected deception in his answers. Ames apparently lied about whether he had been



approached by a hostile intelligence service and whether he had been

engaged in unauthorized meetings with foreigners. The CIA's official report on the case, however, indicated that the lie detector *did not* uncover deception in those answers.

*Not surprising, coming from the group that oversaw construction of a \$300 million invisible building.*

## Oh, for a transcript!

Judge David B. Sentelle—a member of the three-judge panel that appointed controversial Whitewater special prosecutor Kenneth W.



Starr—apparently met with right-wing senators while the panel was still

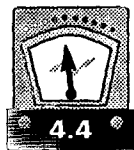
considering its choices. Sentelle, a conservative from North Carolina, reportedly had lunch with Sens. Jesse

Helms (R-NC) and Lauch Faircloth (R-NC) prior to the appointment of Starr, a former Bush administration official.

*It doesn't get any more impartial than that.*

### Transylvanian Sherlock Holmes

A man named Jose Chavez found a skull in a garbage can in Lennox, Calif., earlier this



year. When asked how he determined that that the skull was from

a human being, Chavez said: "I bit on the neck to make sure it was real. That's how you test things."

*He learned science from the CIA.*



©TERRY LABAN

*Stunned by a stupid statement? Nauseated by a noxious news item? Livid about a ludicrous lie? Contact the Appall-O-Meter, In These Times, 2040 N. Milwaukee, Chicago, IL 60647.*

#### APPALL-O-METER SCALE

1. Weightless banality
2. Green Acres stupid
3. Malicious cretinism
4. Howard Sternesque
5. Mary Matalin mean
6. Congenious venality
7. A touch of evil
8. A cancer in the Zeitgeist
9. Et tu, Pol Pot?
10. Newspaper of the Apocalypse

in his youth as a community organizer. And he had some success. Though Chavis' critics contend that NAACP membership has declined, his supporters insist that he has expanded the group's numbers by inspiring thousands of young people to join.

But Chavis was also mounting a perilous political campaign. He was attempting to merge the two major but traditionally antagonistic strains of the black freedom movement: the integrationists and nationalists. This is a risky proposition.

The NAACP's viability depends on its ability to attract funds, and many of its donors were displeased with Chavis' new direction. The Ford Foundation reportedly held back \$250,000 of a \$500,000 grant to the group. Mobil Oil, General Motors and Philip Morris also expressed reservations about lending their names to the organization's fund-raising efforts.

The day after his dismissal, Chavis attended the second African-American Leadership Summit. The summit was Chavis' idea and the first one took place last June in Baltimore, where Farrakhan's attendance provoked controversy and angered the NAACP's old guard. The second summit was canceled by the NAACP immediately after the pivotal board meeting, but was reconvened by Chavis himself. According to observers about 60 organizations—some of them on the radical fringes—showed up. Chavis will likely draw allies from this group for his future campaigns.

Chavis' removal no doubt will resurrect the NAACP's standing with mainstream philanthropies. But it won't do much for the group's declining status in the black community.

—Salim Muwakkil

## STARR CHAMBER

Two days after Kenneth Starr's appointment as Whitewater special prosecutor, the Reagan-Bush conservative was back in his natural political habitat. Starr was lead attraction at a glittering reception sponsored by the right-wing Federalist Society in New Orleans on August 7. Starr's job was to "unveil the Society's newly published book" on social policy and the American Bar Association (ABA), according to the official invitation. The book argues that the ABA is advancing "a collectivist, radical view" through its evaluation of judicial nominees and its supposedly leftist positions on "abortion, gun control, affirmative action, health care ... flag burning and drug use, to name just a few."

The Federalist Society is an obscure but influential conservative group leading the fight to purge any residue of liberalism from the American legal system. Both Starr and David Sentelle, the federal judge who heads the three-judge panel that picked Starr, have close ties to the Society and are frequent speakers at its conferences.

The Starr-Sentelle involvement in the Whitewater investigation has other problematic features. Sentelle named Starr on August 5 after ousting interim Whitewater special prosecutor Robert Fiske at the urging of 10 conservative House Republicans and GOP activist Floyd Brown (the man who made Willie Horton a household name). It was disclosed that on July 14—while the three-judge panel was weighing Fiske's fate—Sentelle had a private lunch with two arch-conservative senators, Jesse Helms and Lauch Faircloth. In public,

Faircloth was demanding Fiske's removal.

In a recent interview, Iran-contra special prosecutor Lawrence Walsh protested Starr's selection, calling the contrast between Fiske's evenhandedness and Starr's partisanship "extreme." Walsh, a Republican, said, "There is no excuse to replace Fiske with a partisan."

Troubling Walsh is the "dogmatism that seems to come out of the Federalist group." From start to finish, members of the Federalist group were a thorn in the side of the Iran-contra investigation. Not only did Sentelle join another Federalist judge, Laurence Silberman, in overturning Oliver North's convictions, Walsh noted, but Sentelle also voted to reverse the convictions of North's White House boss, Adm. John Poindexter. When Walsh sought certiorari to appeal the Sentelle-backed rulings to the Supreme Court, his motion was backed by the Justice Department's career appellate section. But Walsh was opposed by President Bush's solicitor general, none other than Kenneth Starr. Walsh's motion failed.

With Supreme Court Chief Justice William Rehnquist's recent reappointment of Sentelle to control the three-judge panel that oversees special prosecutors and Starr's selection as Whitewater counsel, Walsh now sees a Federalist Society "clique" dominating the powerful special prosecutor apparatus. Walsh senses a danger too, that the Whitewater investigation could become "a political weapon" rather than a fair inquiry into possible law violations.

—Robert Parry

## WORKERS OF THE WORLD, REUNITE!

**I**n a speech that reflects an emerging internationalist spirit in mainstream U.S. unionism, the head of the largest state labor federation recently declared that American unions must reach out to foreign workers. Jack Henning, the secretary-treasurer of the 2-million member California AFL-CIO, called on the national AFL-CIO to convene an international convention of workers.

"Global unionism is the answer to global capitalism. There is no other answer," said Henning during a July address at the California group's 20th biennial Convention.

Henning said the proposed international conference would be the first step in breaking the stranglehold of multinational corporations over workers and entire countries. "[W]e were never meant to be the lieutenants of capitalism," he said of organized labor, "the pallbearers of the workers of the world."

"In 1848 Karl Marx issued the *Communist Manifesto*, which called upon the workers of the world. He said: 'Unite, you have nothing to lose but your chains.' The resulting movement, however flawed, had a vision of global unionism," Henning said.

Such talk—common in the '30s when the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), known as the "Wobblies," were in their heyday—has largely been unheard of since 1950, after the CIO kicked out 11 unions, representing almost 1 million members, on charges of following the communist line.

Several labor leaders interviewed after Henning's speech said there is a growing realization among mainstream labor leaders that the world has

## MEDIA BEAT

By Pat Aufderheide

### Nintendo aerobics

Video-game companies Sega and Nintendo are both launching games for fitness bikes and other exercise equipment. To those who think of the gym as a space free of electronic hucksterism, company boosters claim that they're giving people something to do while they stay fit.

### She should know

Susan Powter, the crew-cut queen of women's fitness infomercials, was a recent (if seemingly unlikely) speaker at a public television conference. Speaking in support of public TV, Powter said, "We [in commercial television] could teach and we could support but the bottom line is always profit." Powter, who claims to have grossed over \$60 million in sales from her "Stop the Insanity" infomercials, declares that "television is responsible for the brain death of Americans."

### Calling the tune I

The line between editorial and business at newspapers and magazines has always been less thick than claimed, but lately it's been paper-thin. For instance, at the *New Haven Register*, an editor made the mistake of running a story on how to shop for the cheapest car, right next to car ads; he was suspended for two weeks after car dealers complained.

And last year *Essence*



magazine, which has long carried cigarette ads, refused to accept an anti-smoking ad. These and other tales from corporate media are the staple of *ad/vice*, a magazine published by the Center for the Study of Commercialism (1875 Connecticut Ave. NW, #300, Washington, DC 20009, 202-332-9110).

## Calling the tune II

Meanwhile, in broadcast media, the government is finding out what public interest advocates were warning about during the deregulatory Reagan years: without public service guidelines, broadcast stations will cut down on public service announcements (PSAs).

PSAs, which stations used to run free as part of their public service obligation, have become extremely hard to find, unless you're a regular night owl. In fact, the federal government has now, according to *Advertising Age*, virtually given up making anti-smoking PSAs for television. A Centers for Disease Control official said that only 3 percent of its PSAs were shown in prime time, and two-thirds were shown in the wee hours—even when they were aimed at kids.

## Endless feedback loop

Not only are you seeing more advertisements when you go to the movie theater, but those ads are increasingly plugging ... television. Both broadcast and cable networks are placing more national and local ads on movie screens.

©1994 Pat Aufderheide

changed, and that unions need to change with it. Labor leaders have had to re-evaluate longstanding positions in the wake of lost manufacturing jobs, mass layoffs, stagnating middle-class living standards and heightened attacks on the remaining 16 percent of the organized American workforce.

Henning's speech was cheered on by a broad cross-section of trade unionists in California, including the traditionally conservative building trades and the Teamsters.

"The biggest problem in labor is a lack of power," said Chuck Mack, president of the 65,000-member Bay Area Teamsters Council, in supporting Henning's call. "We're on a fast track to oblivion."

Leaders like the 78-year-old Henning—who was an undersecretary of labor in the Kennedy administration—have often expressed such sentiments "in the parlor," as he said, but feel it is time to begin to talk publicly again about global unionism.

"I think NAFTA awakened a lot of people," Henning said.

Henning said he expects national AFL-CIO President Lane Kirkland to say the federation already has an international component through the Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU)—but Henning dismisses this group as a "chatterbox society." The ICFTU was formed in 1949 after the United States led an exodus of capitalist countries from the 60-million member World Federation of Trade Unions, which had been formed four years earlier.

"I have no illusions that 'global unionism' is sweeping people off their feet," said Henning from his San Francisco office. "What is sweeping people off their feet are the economic changes they are experiencing."

—Floyd Gómez

## Tomorrow's News Tonight

By Steve Brodner



... as legislative strategist for the Clinton Health Plan



... teaching Richard Ravich about labor relations

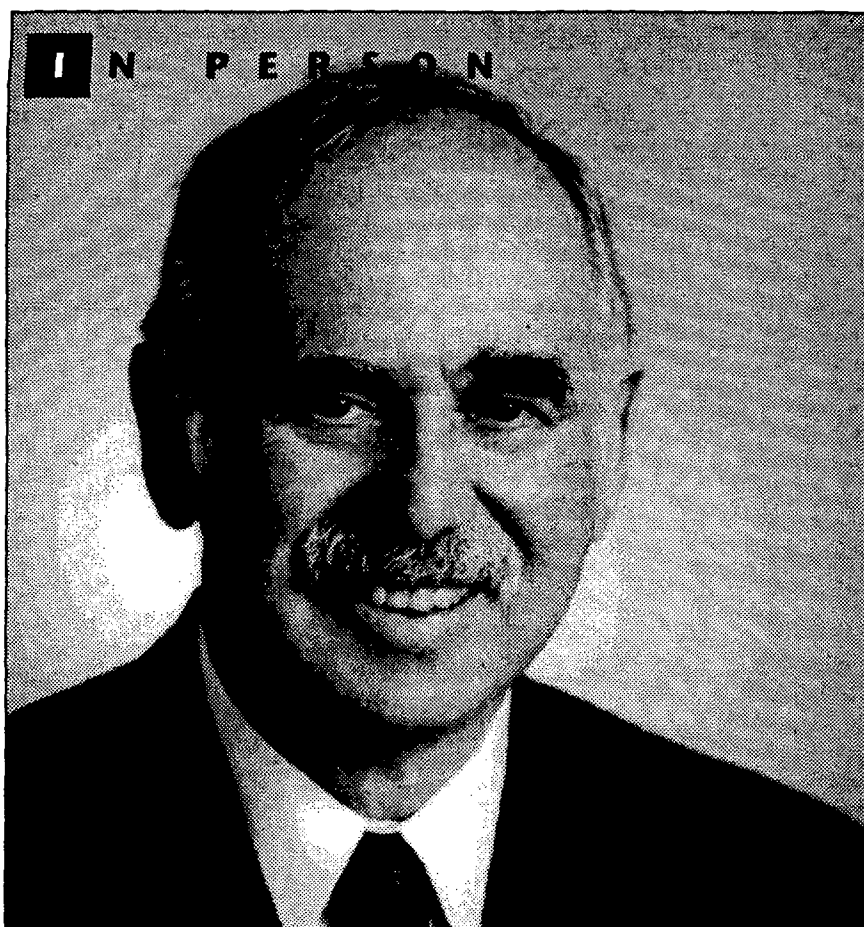
**FORREST GUMP**  
THE  
**DIRECTOR'S CUT**  
IN WHICH HE IS SEEN ...



... as Russian Minister of Atomic Energy



... lunching with Jesse Helms and Judge Sentelle as they choose new Whitewater counsel



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## ELECTRIC DREAMS

*S. David Freeman is seeing solar in New York City*

Citicorp when the bank still had the wealth to build itself a tower in the mid-'70s. But Citicorp never installed the solar water heaters that were designed for the building, and the revolution that was to transform the city's rooftops into a land of energy-producing mirror panels never came to be. Today, New York's major alternative energy projects are pipes drawing methane gas from a landfill.

Enter S. David Freeman, president of the New York Power Authority (NYPA). He arrived in March from the Sacramento Municipal Utility District (SMUD), where he led a renewable energy renaissance in the early '90s after the public voted to close its dysfunctional nuclear power plant. SMUD could have simply opted for natural gas to replace the lost megawatts, but it chose the more complicated path of conservation and renewable energy.

By the year 2000, the Sacramento plan should succeed in filling the nuclear gap with projects that range from planting 500,000 trees for organic air conditioning to erecting 167 wind turbines with the capacity to power 23,000 homes. And Freeman, a true populist who wears a cowboy hat and likes to tweak the big boys of nuclear power and fossil fuels, made sure SMUD's work was covered by the media as a holy crusade.

He brings the same vision east. "We need a bully pulpit that tells the American

Manhattan has one famous monument to solar power, a shiny silver metal tower with a sloped top. The building once bore the nickname "Walter's Whistle," after Walter Wriston, who chaired

## ETC.

By Linda Lutton and  
Miles Harvey

### Border patrol?

Rumors have been making the rounds for months in Guatemala that U.S. military personnel are operating in the Ixcán region, just across the border from the Mexican state of Chiapas—the site of January's Zapatista uprising.

Guatemalan refugees who have returned to the area report having seen several gringo soldiers wandering through the Ixcán, accompanied by supposed Guatemalan soldiers—all dressed in civilian clothing. But even solidarity groups with tight connections to the refugees are having a tough time substantiating the stories. Michael Willis, national coordinator for the Washington-based Network in Solidarity with the People of Guatemala, is pretty sure the rumors are just that. "It's something that we've heard of and haven't been able to pin down," says Willis.

A spokesperson for the U.S. State Department says, "Sometimes people see things and they're not what they seem."

Though seeing isn't always believing, no one denies that U.S. troops were in Guatemala from January to July of this year. At any given time, 500 National Guard and Army Reserve troops trained in the Guatemalan highlands under the auspices of the Strong Roads program. While in Guatemala for two-week training stints, the troops built roads, bridges, schools and a medical clinic—all in conjunction with an army that has the worst human rights record in the hemisphere.

Development projects chan-



nealed through the army have the Guatemalan military sitting pretty. They help bolster Guatemala's international image while giving the army development spoils to spend on communities that toe its line. They provide an excuse for troop presence in rural indigenous communities. And Strong Roads is also more than just a paving project for the United States. Strong Roads Public Affairs Officer Capt. Ed Griffin confides that American troops are "basically training for something like Desert Storm."

## A new kind of cold war

According to Rogelio Maduro, associate editor of the LaRouchite journal *21st Century Science & Technology*, ozone hole scares are part of a devious depopulation plot masterminded by the environmental movement. "Right now methyl bromide is supposedly being banned for ozone depletion, but I think this is really an attack on refrigeration, because that's what CFCs and methyl bromides are used for: the storage and transportation of food," said Maduro. "If you look at the environmentalists' policies, they say they want to reduce world population ... to between 500 million and 2 billion, and the best way to do that would be to destroy the world food system. That would create mass starvation. That's the way to achieve their aim."

Maduro's comments, which came at a conference of anti-environmental groups last year in Nevada, were quoted in David Helvarg's *The War Against the Greens*, due to be released next month by Sierra Club Books.

people that we can move ... away from nuclear, away from oil, away from coal, away from all of it," he told a conference of utility executives in April. "We have got the technology to use our renewable resources ... to power all of our high-energy civilization," he added. "It's easier to do scientifically than to develop fusion power. It's easier to do than to get up to Mars."

From 1978 to 1988 Freeman served on the board of the Tennessee Valley Authority, where he oversaw the cancellation of eight nuclear plants and the implementation of a \$1 million energy savings and home weatherization program.

Now 66, his passion is still young. During an interview with *In These Times*, he flips through his leather pocket photo album of electric vehicles as if they were his grandchildren. In November, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency will decide whether New York and the rest of the Eastern seaboard must adopt California's vehicle emissions standards, including the rule to start selling electric cars by 1998.

Freeman and his boss, Gov. Mario Cuomo, want the California standards, believing that New York could become an "electropolis," a hotbed for the new green technologies. "There's no place on Earth with more buses than New York City," he says.

He hopes to recruit electric-bus manufacturers to the state. "You have 200,000 people a day riding an electric car ... called a train," he adds. They could finish the trip in a modest electric station car.

"And all the taxis in New York City could be electric," he says, pointing to his favorite news clipping, an article from the December 10, 1898, edition of *Harper's Weekly* about electric cabs in Manhattan. They resembled horse carriages with the driver behind the cab as if seated at a counter. "In 1898, there was a privately owned taxicab company at 53rd and Broadway that hauled people around New York City at 30 cents a passenger mile. The cabs averaged 15 miles per hour. Today, the average speed in New York City is seven miles per hour," Freeman says with a triumphant chuckle.

Where will all of this electricity come from? The NYPA now functions as a giant electricity wholesaler, generating cheap megawatts of power from two large dams on the St. Lawrence River, two nuclear power plants and eight other generators, ranging from small dams to an aging fossil-fuel burner in Queens. It supplies power to the state's seven private utilities and to the Metropolitan Transit Authority, which runs the subways and trains around New York City. The NYPA hasn't been known for energy conservation, but it has a fledgling program that has already put solar panels on a high school and on a warehouse. Freeman's arrival will transform this program from tinkering into central policy.

"It's like night and day," says Mark Kapner, the NYPA's manager of conservation and alternative energy. "Now we have someone who says, 'What are you waiting for?'"

New York will never be a solar paradise, but it has plenty of potential wind power and woody biomass in its forests as well as in the construction debris, shipping pallets and other wastes in the city. "We're kind of going back to the future, since in many parts of the country the entire electric system was hydro-power and wood," Freeman says.

But he worries that others may not follow his lead: "The electric power industry loves to be fashionable. Everybody bought a nuke in the '70s, just ordered them out of catalogues. Then they started energy efficiency, but this affair is becoming a one-night stand. The latest fad is price competition."

—Will Nixon and John Downey

# THE FIRST STONE

## AMERICA'S CORPORATE LENINISTS

By Joel Bleifuss

**B**ig Blue is back on the cutting edge. Last month, IBM vice chairman Paul Rizzo wrote a letter to the company's 110,000 employees, urging them to join a grass-roots campaign to defeat the Democrats' health care legislation. Grass-roots organizing tactics, once a weapon of citizen movements, are increasingly being adopted by American corporations, as they ready their employees for a perverse form of political warfare.

"The purpose of the grass-roots program is not to get more Americans involved in the political system," said corporate grass-roots organizer Michael Dunn. "The purpose of a grass-roots program is one purpose period, and that is to influence legislative policy." Dunn made this point last February during his keynote address at the "Annual Back-to-Back Grassroots Meetings," an event sponsored by the Public Relations Council, an influential network of corporate public affairs officers (PAOs). Not surprisingly, IBM is a member of the council.

Dunn, the president of the Washington-based PR firm Michael E. Dunn and Associates, is a leading proponent of corporate America's latest gambol in the political world—the establishment of "grass roots" political machines within companies and industry organizations. While Ralph Reed of the Christian Coalition offered conferencegoers tips on how to mobilize targeted constituencies, Dunn and other PR executives translated Reed's tactics into corporate strategies. (John Stauber, editor of the Madison-based quarterly *PR Watch*, supplied *In These Times* with a tape of the conference. See "The First Stone," August 22.)

Dunn, speaking to a collection of the nation's top PAOs, sounded like a Marine Corps sergeant sending his troops into battle. "The reality is you are going to be involved in this political process whether you want to be or not," he said. "The only real question is whether or not you are going to win. And if you do not have a grass-roots program your odds of winning have seriously diminished. You're going to be reamed out within that legislative process—and it will be painful." Nervous laughter filled the room.

The message of the conference was that a corporation can save its ass—once it is armed with technology like that deployed by the Christian Coalition, and once it has established an in-house, grass-roots political program.

"Almost anybody can put together a grass-roots effort to influence a single issue," said Dunn. "But to put together a program that is capable of doing that on a variety of issues over a period of 5 or 10 or 15 years is an entirely different game."

First, according to Dunn, companies must systematically build a "broad-based program," a political propaganda effort targeted at a company's employees, retirees, vendors and customers. The aim of this indoctrination is to make the

majority of employees at each corporate outpost "sensitized to the impact government has on what they are trying to do and to recognize they've got to play a role in that whole program."

But it is a mistake to think that "broad-based membership" in these programs involves "broad-based leadership."

Neal Cohen, the director of political support services at APCO Associates in Washington, suggested that corporations follow a model that Vladimir Lenin would have admired. As comrade Cohen put it to the assembled PAOs: "Broad-based membership is: What does the public see? What do the legislators see? Decision-making is a core group of three or so people who have similar interests and who are going to get the job done and not veer off."

Dunn likewise advocates a consolidation of power. Dunn said the "broad-based program" that indoctrinates all members of a corporation's extended family must be accompanied by a "key contact program." Under this program, companies recruit "key contacts" from each corporate outpost. This corporate cadre then develops a "personal relationship with that elected official to whom they are assigned."

"In order to have a quality relationship that key contact has to basically be willing to integrate into that lawmaker's political organization, and become part of their political campaign apparatus, be a part of the social circle of which that lawmaker is a part," said Dunn.

John Stauber, *PR Watch* editor, while disturbed by most PR ploys, is especially troubled by this latest permutation in the industry. "Unfortunately, it is a brilliant corporate tactic," said Stauber. "It is effective especially in times of economic hardship and corporate downsizing. A smart employee who wants to keep his or her job and rise to a higher level will quickly get the message that it will pay off in the long run if they become a political operative for the company, befriending candidates and becoming the grass-roots eyes and ears for the corporation in local politics."

But to get to this point the CEOs who run American business must, according to Dunn, "put that key contact



responsibility into a job description." And once the job is defined, Dunn said, "a job extremely well done" must be rewarded so that the key contact has "some rationale" for "making the world safe for the company."

Dunn did not discuss how the company should deal with those employees who fail to get with the "program." But such a possibility touches on issues of political liberties and the integrity of democratic institutions. Said Stauber: "With the development of these programs, employees will be expected to vote and agitate not for what they as individuals see as politically good or desirable but for the political interests of the company that employs them."

And Dunn sees those "grass-roots agents" as soldiers, whose loyalty is essential for victory in today's competitive environment. "This is a battle, folks. There is a German general who once said politics is war without bullets. And if you think you are not in a war right now, you have not been in the trenches yet. This is a war," he thundered. "Ultimately, every organization in America has to move to a broad-based program. Until we get all of our people involved in understanding, we are going to continually lose the political marketplace."

Barbara Bey, for one, is girded for battle. She is the managing director of public affairs at the American Council of Life Insurance in Washington. And she is also the Public Affairs Council's chairman-elect for 1995. Bey told *Impact*, the Council's monthly newsletter, how the American Council of Life Insurance is preparing for action. "Technology is what allows us to do it and do it efficiently, and do it well," Bey said. "We're building an interactive database for grass-roots use in explaining concerns to members, legislators and other stakeholders before those concerns escalate into issues. We are also developing a key contact program to expand and take the grass-roots program to 'the next step.'"

There is just no substitute for grass-roots campaigns, according to Eric Rennie, the director of public policy communication at the ITT-Hartford Insurance Group. Rennie told *Impact*: "In a top-down organization such as ours, when the local general manager wants employees to sit down and write letters to their legislators, it's often done right there at work. The employees are given the paper, the pens, the stamps and the envelopes. Afterwards, copies are made so we know what kind of response we have achieved. Because we don't feel comfortable doing that with our customers, we don't know what proportion of them actually responded or along

what lines." And that is where grass-roots mobilization comes in. "These days," Rennie continued, "corporate grass-roots campaigns require that we knock on more and more doors, the doors of our customers, distributors, suppliers, related industries and other members of our 'extended family.'"

Robert C. Kirkwood, the director of government affairs at Hewlett-Packard, is another true believer. He told *Impact*: "We had an epiphany ... in the NAFTA effort. For the first time, we went to a widespread grass-roots program that involved employees through the country. My sense is that we will use that as a part of our regular arsenal." Hewlett-Packard's next target is GATT, which has yet to be passed by Congress. Like NAFTA, GATT "precisely lends itself to a huge business grass-roots effort," said Kirkwood. "The environmental movement will be upset, labor will be troubled. Everyone hasn't tooled up yet, but they will."

Does anyone doubt how the final vote on GATT will turn out? The progressive establishment, the organizations, foundations and unions that pour their energies into single-issue campaigns or innovative programs to better the common good, should perhaps re-examine their role in national politics. It is fine to act locally and think globally, but must that mean surrender nationally?

## THE ADVENTURES OF A HUGE MOUTH

by Peter Hannan



**E** N V I R O N M E N T

# Crowded out

**A**

*Population-control advocates are often dismissed as racist and paranoid. But they increasingly have the facts on their side.*

By Will Nixon

Americans always imagine that the disaster of overpopulation lies somewhere in the future, as in the 1973 science fiction movie *Soylent Green*, which envisioned a world so crowded that giant scoopers had to clear people like dirt from city squares. But we could just as easily look to the past. "Countryside hovels teemed with young children. ... In the larger cities, a floating population of tens of thousands of unemployed slept on the ground overnight and poured into the streets the next day. Jails, pauper houses, foundling hospitals and lunatic asylums were packed with human casualties who had not yet arrived at their common grave," writes Yale historian Paul Kennedy in *Preparing for the Twenty-First Century*.

Kennedy is describing Europe in 1798, when the Caucasian population

explosion was contributing to the social ferment of the French Revolution and inspiring Thomas Malthus to write *An Essay on the Principle of Population*. The Puritan professor was wrong about many things, such as failing to foresee the acceptance of contraception. But he was right to fear the potential gap between the exponential growth of human population and the linear growth of the food supply.

Malthus remains with us today mainly as an epithet cast at those who worry too publicly about the dangers of the world's rapidly growing population. Alexander Cockburn, in a series of columns in *The Nation* this year, has caricatured the new Malthusians as racist "overlords" eager to lock the gates against the world's poor and to promote sterilization as the cure for welfare. Cockburn writes in satirical extremes, but many on the left still assume that "population" must be a code word for something sinister, masking the real issue of the distribution of wealth in the world. Once people in developing countries unshackle themselves from multinational

capitalism and rise out of poverty, they will naturally have fewer children, or so the left claims. We should call for new economics, not new biology.

But the new Malthusians are hardly ogres—or even necessarily capitalists. In the debates over population, ideological lines are hardly so clear-cut; indeed, the most strident attacks on population control have come from Lyndon LaRouche. (In a recent full-page ad in the *Washington Post Weekly Edition*, LaRouche's Schiller Institute predicts "a new era of deliberate, global depopulation which will far surpass in savagery even Hitler's dreams.") Many on the right, only a little less stridently, dismiss concerns with population as disguised attempts to push an agenda of abortion and social control. Most capitalists, looking on people as potential customers, have no more interest in controlling population growth than Cockburn does.

The new Malthusians, often biologists by profession, simply do not share the common faith that humans are somehow exempt from the natural forces that lead other species to surge and collapse. At the least, they suggest that continued rapid population growth will add tremendous strains to the social problems we already have, from employment to ethnic strife to environmental degradation. The great spread of people is already causing the largest wave of extinctions since a meteor crash caused the death of the dinosaurs 65 million years ago. At the worst, the new Malthusians foresee a crash in the human population in the next century if we don't take steps right now to change our reproductive behavior. It's this aura of apocalypse more than anything else, I think, that has made them



pariahs. I don't care for the bleakness, either, especially if it comes tinged with misanthropy, but they are addressing one of the fundamental issues of our time.

The world today has 5.5 billion people, and the population grows by some 90 million each year. By the year 2000, the population of the world will likely top 6.2 billion. By the middle of the next century, according to United Nations estimates, population could reach 8 to 12 billion, depending on how quickly fertility rates drop. The International Conference on Population and Development, which is meeting in Cairo this month, has drafted a plan of action to steer us to the lower target. After 30 years of experience in the field, family planners believe we now know how to lower fertility rates. It doesn't require the redistribution of wealth so much as the empowerment of women—improved education for girls and women, better maternal health care, the freedom to choose the size of one's family. Only a decade ago, many feminists bristled at the concept of "population control"; now their ideas form the center of the debate. (See story on page 16.) The major opposition to the conference now comes from the Vatican, which opposes abortion and birth control. (See story on page 17.)

In the preparatory meetings for Cairo, the planners paid no attention to the neo-Malthusians. "The purpose of the conference is to bury Malthus, not to praise him," says Alex Marshall, who handles media for the United Nations Population Fund. The delegates have rejected the doomsday scenarios, dismissing "carrying capacity" and "optimum human populations" as fuzzy science at best, full of latent value judgments about how others should live. "In the Netherlands, people live comfortably with a density similar to that in Bangladesh," he says. And the population surge is not a spigot we can simply turn off because someone says the world would be a better place with 2 billion inhabitants. "No conceivable natural or human disaster is going to make much of a dent" in the growing wave toward 8 billion people, Marshall says, so conference delegates have focused on what the world can do to hold population growth to this level.

But the vital question that won't be debated at Cairo is whether the planet can even support 8 billion people. In the early '70s, Paul Ehrlich's book *The Population Bomb* galvanized the public by raising the specter of mass famines and impending scarcities of raw materials. His argument still thrives, albeit revised and refined, but the warning that struck a chord this year was Robert

Kaplan's "The Coming Anarchy" in the February *Atlantic Monthly*.

Kaplan doesn't write about starvation or shortages;



instead, he suggests that the environment will become "the national-security issue of the 21st century," because "surging populations, spreading disease, deforestation and soil erosion, water depletion [and] air pollution" will exacerbate the tensions between countries and between governments and their people.

In West Africa, all too many people have egg-yolk eyes from repeated bouts of malaria, guards escort diners at restaurants across the sidewalk to their cars and bandits control the countryside. Kaplan foresees the same for much of the developing world. "We are entering a bifurcated world," he writes. "Part of the globe is inhabited by Hegel's and Fukuyama's Last Man, healthy, well fed and pampered by

technology. The other, larger, part is inhabited by Hobbes' First Man, condemned to a life that is 'nasty, brutish, and short.' Although both parts will be threatened by environmental stress, the Last Man will be able to master it; the First Man will not."

Overpopulation, Kaplan's article suggested, does not simply mean the starving children on UNICEF posters; it also means gun-wielding Somali teens dragging the bodies of their victims through the streets. "In the developing world," he writes, "environmental stress will present people with a choice that is increasingly among totalitarianism (as in Iraq), fascist-tending mini-states (as in Serb-held Bosnia) and road-warrior cultures (as in Somalia)." Two months after the article appeared, Rwanda, the most densely populated country in Africa, erupted in genocidal chaos, a grisly coda to Kaplan's argument.

Cockburn devoted two columns to calling Kaplan a racist, the U.N.'s Marshall wrote a letter to the *Atlantic* pointing out all the good that developing nations have accomplished, and many others read Kaplan as a dour traveller who looked upon all the countries he visited with a jaundiced eye. I'm not so sure. From Haiti to Somalia, from Chiapas to the Philippines, we see rural people in violent crises, with surging populations and declining natural resources. These people have been punished, too, by cruel politics and exploitative economics, but they still face the sheer crowding of the land. And, as Paul Kennedy has argued, these people don't really have the same options that Europeans had in Malthus' time: there's no undeveloped New World to which they can migrate.

The true pessimists in the debate are the naturalists watching the wild Earth vanish under the sprawl of people,

## A sea change in U.S. policy

**I**n what one leading advocate described as an "exceptionally important moment" in world population control, President Clinton recently announced a major shift in U.S. policy. At a State Department speech in July, the president declared that Washington—the world's leading contributor to population-control efforts—would no longer merely emphasize family planning.

Citing research showing that educated and empowered women have fewer babies, Clinton declared that "at the top of our agenda will be active support for the efforts to invest in the women of the world." He outlined a plan of action that called for equal education for girls, full rights of citizenship for women and the end of discrimination against women at home and in the workplace.

The speech didn't get Clinton much play in the American press; population control is generally considered too mushy for hard-nosed news editors. Nor did Clinton's bold new vision—endorsing prevention through universally available contraception and women's economic and social empowerment—endear him to powerful domestic lobbies, including the Roman Catholic Church, conservative Republicans and pro-life activists.

Much to their chagrin, Clinton expressed the hope that "new, high-quality, voluntary family planning and reproductive programs" would be available to every person worldwide in just a few years. "Parents must have the right to decide freely and responsibly the number and spacing of their children," he claimed, endorsing the draft plan of action for this month's U.N. population conference in Cairo.

Many advocates in the field of sustainable development and population policy are pleased with the president's new policy. "I've been in this business 25 years, but in my entire career this was perhaps the most exceptionally important moment, says Adrienne Germain of the International Women's Health Coalition. "The president made clear the sea change in U.S. policy," "This field has never before dealt directly with the issues of sex and power relations."

But even some within the population community are concerned about Clinton's new approach, fearing that it strays too far afield from the concrete mechanics of family planning. They point out that the notion of full empowerment of women may seem abstract, even frivolous, when Third World women may be more concerned about feeding themselves and their families.

Still, Tim Wirth, a former Colorado senator who is now the State Department official in charge of formulating U.S. population-control policy, believes that the empowerment of women is the necessary prerequisite to stabilizing population growth. "In too many parts of the world, girls are fed less, given less medical care, withdrawn from school earlier and forced into hard labor sooner than boys," says Wirth. "And, although they perform an estimated 60 percent of the world's work, women own only 1 percent of the world's land and earn just 10 percent of the world's income."

The administration's makeover of U.S. population policy will have a ripple effect around the world. The United States is the single-largest contributor to population activities, earmarking \$585 million in this year's budget for population stabilization. And the U.S. delegation to Cairo, led by Bella Abzug and comprised mostly of women, will loudly advocate the new themes of universally available contraception and the empowerment of women.

The developing world does want the United States' money. But lectures on stabilizing population irritate some leaders, who charge that the developed world's greedy consumption is more a threat to the Earth than Third World population booms. Notes another participant at the State Department event, Chief Bisi Ogunleye of Nigeria: "It is time for the rich to share their riches. If you don't, the poor will share their poverty."

—April Oliver (Sarah Colt contributed research to this article.)



who are consuming natural resources much faster than nature can possibly replenish them. "In the world where I spend my time—[among] thousands of people who are mostly scientists—there is no controversy," says Donella Meadows, who teaches environmental studies at Dartmouth College. "There is a hands-up-in-the-air helplessness. They expect a vast and terrible crash, and they can do nothing about it."

Meadows worked with the team that produced *The Limits to Growth* in 1972 and *Beyond the Limits* in 1992, two landmark studies that used computer models to predict future collisions over the next century between an economy geared to unlimited growth and a planet with limited resources. Since the industrial revolution, she notes, we have lost half of the world's wetlands and half of its tropical forests. Traditional economists have countered *Limits* by insisting that the market can handle the problems of environmental overuse: as resources grow scarce, the economists argue, they grow more expensive, spurring technological innovations that allow us new alternatives. But rising prices can just as easily set off a feeding frenzy—as capitalists and poachers chase after the last rhinos and tigers, virgin redwoods and tropical teak trees.

So far, society has survived the shortages and the environmental stresses, but computer scenarios suggest that eventually our luck will run out: the various crises will come to a head all at once. "[T]he world system does not run out of land or food or resources or pollution absorption capability," Meadows warns, "*it runs out of the ability to cope.*" And so, like any other species that exceeds the carrying capacity of its ecosystem, we face the prospect of a catastrophic population collapse—unless we can stabilize the world population at 8 billion or so.

David Pimental, an agricultural expert at Cornell University, dismisses 8 billion as a virtual sentence of pover-

ty. His studies suggest that an "optimum human population" of 2 billion could be reached by 2100. "And I'm the optimist," he insists. "I've heard of three other studies that project 500 to 600 million." Pimental sees land as the ultimate limit. Each person needs about 0.5 hectares of cropland to provide themselves a nutritious diet of plants and animals, he notes. While some countries—such as the United States—have more than enough land to feed their current inhabitants, the world average is only about half this amount, which partly explains why 1.2 to 2 billion people live in poverty. To keep up with 90 million new mouths to feed each year and to replace the farmland spoiled by erosion, desertification or acidification, we will need to clear about 15 million hectares of forests a year for new cropland.

## No choice

**S**ince March, the Vatican has issued one broadside after another accusing the planners of the United Nations International Conference on Population and Development of a brand of "cultural imperialism" that promotes "abortion on demand, sexual promiscuity and distorted notions of family." Pope John Paul II must honestly believe that the institutions of marriage and family are in grave danger, since he has poured more passion into this campaign than almost any other in his 16-year tenure. But more than morality is at stake.

The Catholic Church happens to be one of the largest health care agencies in the world, with almost 96,000 hospitals and other medical facilities under its wing. "In many countries the Catholic Church is the major provider of health services," says Francis Kissling, head of Catholics For A Free Choice. But the Vatican relies heavily on international foreign aid to run these agencies. If reproductive health care becomes an integral part of general health care, as many delegates to the conference want, the Vatican will be torn between its budget and its beliefs; money earmarked to family planning will go somewhere else. And the delegates want the wealthy countries of the world to raise their aid to international family planning from about 1 percent of their foreign aid budgets to 4 percent. The Vatican fears that this shift will take money from the programs it runs, such as disaster relief. In the United States, for instance, Catholic Relief Services receives about 75 percent of its budget from the federal government.

The Vatican also appears to want to reassert papal authority over the Catholic public through government policies, since it has failed to do so through the pulpit. Around the world, Catholics hew much more closely to the attitudes of their societies than of their church. In Brazil, for instance, 72 percent of Catholics accept contraceptives, and 40 percent believe couples should make their own decisions about abortion. In the Czech Republic, fewer than 3 percent of Catholics practice the natural rhythm method of birth control that the church endorses. More than 63 percent use modern contraception. In the United States, 84 percent support abortion in at least some situations—virtually the same percentage as in the population at large.

The tragedy is that many Catholics can't practice these beliefs. In Brazil, according to the paper *O Globo*, some 80 percent of the women in the country's urban slums don't know about modern contraception—and so "abortion has become the poor woman's method of birth control." Abortion may be illegal in Latin America, but every year an estimated 4 million clandestine abortions occur there. And worldwide at least 200,000 women die of botched abortions each year. Delegates to the Cairo conference have insisted, again and again, that birth control is the answer to this slaughter. "As many as 300 million couples around the globe want to plan their families but do not have access to quality information and services," says State Department Undersecretary Tim Wirth.

The Vatican's own lay panel of advisers, the Pontifical Academy of Sciences, has recommended that couples limit their children to two apiece. But that has hardly deterred the Vatican's campaign.

—W.N.

We can't do that forever.

But the real crunch will come after we've run out of fossil fuels. We'll have to rely on biomass fuels from plants and trees, as well as on photovoltaic panels that directly generate electricity. Both technologies take up a great deal of room. A city of 100,000 people would need some 200,000 hectares of forests for fuel or 2,700 hectares for solar panels. Pimental suggests that the world population would have to drop to 2 billion in order for the planet to support all of its citizens at the standard of living now enjoyed by present-day Europeans. But he doubts that the world will take such drastic steps to lower its birthrates.

Some people in the family planning field dismiss Meadows and Pimental as academics with too much faith in their computer models. It's hard to treat 100-year forecasts as anything but intriguing exercises. And Paul Ehrlich made doomsday predictions in the early '70s that sound like howlers today. But why look ahead 100 years? The world already suffers from social injustice and environmental abuse. In 1993, the global grain harvest fell by 5 percent. Nine of the 17 major ocean fisheries are in serious decline. We lose topsoil 20 to 40 times faster than nature replenishes it. And yet we assume that we can simply outgrow these problems.

The truly radical idea, Meadows suggests, would be to meet our crises without counting on growth as the only answer. "The moment you recognize limits the question of sharing becomes absolutely foremost in your mind," she says. Sharing our wealth, sharing our resources, sharing our knowledge. The new Malthusians don't ask us to close the door against the world's poor, but to begin respecting them as neighbors.

Will Nixon is associate editor of *E* Magazine.

## HOW TO SUCCEED WITH WOMEN

Anthony F. Badalamenti, PhD

- A New Book HOW TO SUCCEED WITH WOMEN by Anthony F. Badalamenti, PhD

SCIENTIFIC SUPPORT is releasing a new book, HOW TO SUCCEED WITH WOMEN. It offers men new and highly effective principles for connecting with that gal of their dreams. The author spent over 15 years in singles and psychiatric research discovering how men succeed.

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IN

## MEXICO

# Eyes on the prize

W

*The  
Zapatistas  
look beyond  
the election.*

By Dan La Botz  
CHIAPAS, MEXICO

earing ponchos and sombreros, carrying backpacks and bedrolls, some 6,000 representatives of Mexico's democratic reform movements came tramping into a remote rainforest amphitheater for one of the most remarkable events in this nation's history. In early August, the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN), which launched the armed uprising in Chiapas last

January, invited virtually every center and left opposition group to join them in the Lacandon jungle, and—almost without exception—they came.

To chart the course of a new Mexico, the Zapatistas had gathered revolutionaries and reformers, community organizers and political activists, dissident labor leaders and middle-class do-gooders. Known as the National Democratic Convention (CND), the Zapatista conclave was the broadest meeting of opposition forces in Mexican history. As armed guerrillas discussed political strategy with urban intellectuals, it seemed entirely possible that the 65-year reign of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI)—what Peruvian writer Mario Vargas Llosa has called “the perfect dictatorship”—was finally coming to a close.

Just two weeks later, however, as the PRI secured victory in the August 21

presidential election, many commentators insisted that the dream born in the Lacandon jungle was dead. Although the Zapatistas never endorsed Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, the defeated candidate of the center-left Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD), they clearly had hoped their convention could sway the election against the PRI. Even so, the Zapatistas were looking far beyond August 21.

The long-term goal of the convention was to create a broad national citizens' movement that could end the PRI's one-party state and lay the foundation for a democratic Mexico. Until quite recently, both the PRI and its opposition derived their political rhetoric from the Mexican Revolution of 1910 to 1920, a language that stressed political unity and national pride over democratic formalities. But delegates at the convention spoke the new language of

*On the first day of trading after Mexico's Aug. 21 presidential election, the stock market in Mexico City shot up to its highest level in six months. With the long-ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) claiming victory, investors around the world expressed renewed confidence in Mexico. The results—a “clean” victory for the PRI accompanied by minimal turmoil—were reassuring for U.S. business and government leaders, whose hopes for expanded trade with Mexico depend on that country's continued stability. But Mexico's future is far from clear. Though the PRI survived this election, many observers feel it is on the verge of splintering. Many expect one wing to follow the widely popular Manuel Camacho Solís, the government's envoy in peace negotiations with the Zapatista rebels of Chiapas, and another wing to stick with incoming president Ernesto Zedillo Ponce de León, the bland Ivy League-educated technocrat who won just 47 percent of the vote.*

*Even that percentage is disputed, however. Opposition forces from both the Mexican right and left have focused on the election's many irregularities—even the government concedes that nearly a million Mexicans may have been unable to vote due to a shortage of ballots. And Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, candidate of the center-left Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD), insists the number is far larger. While Cárdenas undoubtedly was deprived of many votes through fraud, most believe this year's tampering did not compare to the abuses of the 1988 election, when the government crashed its electoral computer system to keep Cárdenas from winning. Much of the blame for Cárdenas' loss must be placed on the PRI-dominated press, which consistently denied coverage to the PRD candidate. But, according to many PRD members, Cárdenas, a one-time PRI governor, failed to inspire the voters and alienated many PRD members with his top-down leadership style. In the following reports from Mexico, In These Times explores the long-term prospects for democracy in Mexico.*



Mexican politics, a discourse derived from the struggles against the military dictatorships in South America and against the Communist regimes of Eastern Europe. Convention delegates rejected the political domination of any one party and called for the creation of democratic spaces and political pluralism. The Zapatista convention, instead of advocating armed struggle, spoke of the struggle of civil society against the state, of the mobilization of the citizenry against political dictatorship.

The CND organizers had attempted to exclude groups such as the Poor Peoples Party, a clandestine group that favors the violent overthrow of the Mexican government. They also frowned on those, such as the Independent Movement of the Proletariat, who advocated a boycott of the August 21 elections. Nevertheless, those points of view were expressed during the convention—though they were in a definite minority.

#### Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas

The idea that a guerrilla army would convene a civilian assembly to find a peaceful solution to Mexico's problems might seem bizarre. But, as the famous Mexican author Elena Poniatowski asked, "when have we ever seen a guerrilla movement whose first action was to establish a library?"—as the Zapatistas had done in their jungle encampment. "[In the past], guerrillas have spent their money on war, not to collect books, create libraries and create a convention dedicated to peace," said Poniatowski.

Although press accounts of the convention focused on the dramatic meeting in the Lacandon jungle, much of the convention's real work was done several days earlier in San Cristóbal de las Casas, the Chiapas tourist haven. Before heading to the jungle, the convention delegates gathered at five sites around San Cristóbal. There, they held "mesas,"





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workshops where participants developed strategies for dealing with the political and economic problems facing Mexico. Resolutions drafted at the mesas called for an end to the PRI's control of the news media, chambers of commerce and labor unions. Delegates also called for the creation of a transitional government and a national convention to write a new Mexican constitution.

But there was little talk of fundamental economic change in the mesas, and no agreement on an alternative to capitalism for Mexico. Apparently, the CND organizers and the political parties of center and left such as the Party of the PRD and the Revolutionary Workers Party agreed that discussions of socialism were, so to speak, out of order. "We are in the classic situation of attempting to extricate ourselves from a dictatorship," argued one convention organizer, "much like the situation in Brazil or Argentina in the '80s." In such a situation, he said, social-

**Peasants in Chiapas. One percent of the state's population owns 48 percent of the land.**

ism is not on the agenda.

So, on August 6 the CND workshops in San Cristóbal adopted their resolutions, and

the next morning the convention began its long, restless ride to the amphitheater at "Aguascalientes," the name the Zapatistas gave the jungle meeting site—recalling the town where Emiliano Zapata and Pancho Villa met in 1914 to unite their peasant armies. Hundreds of buses transported 6,000 delegates and observers and some 600 reporters through the mountains of Chiapas. What might have been a 10-hour drive was transformed into a tortuous 24-hour journey as the buses passed through military checkpoints, first of the Mexican federal army and then of the EZLN.

Since mid-January there has been a truce between the

Mexican army and the EZLN, and government officials went out of their way to cooperate with the organizers of the CND. The governor of Chiapas provided scores of buses, and the state police and the army provided escorts. Federal soldiers boarded each bus to welcome the delegates to the Lacandon forest and to express their hope that the convention would be a success. The beleaguered EZLN soldiers—who have been surrounded by federal troops for eight months—were more taciturn, and hardly said a word as they inspected the buses.

The first session at Aguascalientes on August 8 was to begin at noon, but it was postponed until dusk. The delay may have been due to logistical difficulties, but—and this would be consistent with Zapatista practice—perhaps it was done for dramatic effect. As the sun set, Subcomandante Marcos, the now famous mestizo spokesperson for the Zapatistas' indigenous army, appeared on the amphitheater stage. Along with an indigenous leader of the EZLN, Major Tacho, he welcomed the delegates.

Reverting to the poetic speech that has filled his widely published communiqués from Chiapas, Marcos explained that the meeting site had been “a fort, a bunker, an armament factory, a military training center, an arms depot.” But now it was transformed into “Noah's Ark, a Tower of Babel, the woodland ship of Fitzcarraldo, the raving neo-Zapatismo, the pirate ship.”

The EZLN had literally carved Aguascalientes out of the jungle. The soldiers had cut down trees on a hillside to create the amphitheater. And the fallen trees served as benches, while dozens of tarps were sewn together to cover an area the size of a football field. After greeting the delegates, Marcos told the convention to do its duty, to come up with a strategy for achieving a

democratic Mexico, so that the EZLN would not have to return to the armed struggle.

The convention then seated a 100-person presidium to draft a final set of resolutions. Sixty-four members of the presidium came from Mexico's 32 states, and they constituted a roster of Mexico's most committed organizers and activists. The 36 others were outstanding academics, intellectuals, civic leaders and human rights activists. The first to be named by Marcos, and the individual chosen to head the presidium, was Rosario Ibarra de Piedra, a leader of

*Continued on page 25*

## PRI-washed

**I**n the wake of an election once again disfigured by what the leading independent monitoring group, Civic Alliance, called significant irregularities, Mexico's opposition has launched a rolling wave of protest—in streets, workplaces and communities. The goal is to force changes in the Mexican political system, congealed for decades under the rule of the oddly named Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI).

“The government is betting on our frustration and demobilization,” Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, the presidential candidate of the left Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD), told an angry crowd of 40,000 in this capital's central plaza the day after the August 21 election. “But that won't be possible. This election, with its official results, constitutes a grave provocation against political and social stability, and against the peace of the nation.”

Privately, PRD strategists recognized that vote fraud on election day, although significant, was probably not enough to explain their defeat. Rather, they suggest that the ruling party's control and blatant misuse of state power better explains its continued electoral strength. The PRI controls everything from the dispersal of anti-poverty funds to the allocation of stalls in marketplaces, giving it an influence in every one of the nation's 95,000 polling places that the opposition had no hope of matching.

The PRI is arguably the most successful election rigger in the history of the planet. The party, which has ruled the country uninterruptedly since 1929, controls the government apparatus—and thus jobs—at the national, state and local level. And it has money as well, spending on this election probably several times the legal limit of \$42 million. (By contrast, Cárdenas and the PRD spent only about \$2 million.)

Jeff Faux, of the Economic Policy Institute in Washington, D.C., was one of the nearly 1,000 international observers monitoring the elections. His group visited seven rural and small town polling places in the state of Mexico, about an hour north of the capital. They witnessed what was possibly outright fraud, including voters who were allowed to leave the polling station without dipping their thumbs into indelible ink, meant to prevent multiple voting.

“Our sense was that many voters had already been bribed in some way—either directly, with money, or indirectly with favors of some kind,” Faux said. “We also felt that many of them thought that the PRI would somehow learn how they had voted, even though it seemed to us that the people supervising the mechanics of the actual voting were trying to do it right, to keep it secret.”

Yet the results were hardly the overwhelming victory for the PRI that one might expect. “You have all the jobs; you have all the money; you have the local officials; you have the TV and the radio—and you still only get 45 percent of the vote,” Faux commented. “I don't think you can take too much pride in your performance.”

Elvira Vasquez, a college teacher and a mother, came to the PRD post-election protest rally with a mixture of sadness and anger. “They should respect the vote,” she said. “If we lose, we lose, period. But they stole plenty of votes.”

“This election has been a clash between two cultures: a culture of fraud, and a culture of creativity,” she continued. “Theirs is the culture of the lie; ours is the culture of creating a more healthy society, a more equal society.”

—James North



## Past vs. peasant

**T**wo small girls with tangled hair and wide brown eyes stare across a rocky meadow at a chain-link fence topped with barbed wire. A woman dressed in the colorful garb of this area's indigenous people reclines on a cot in a town gymnasium. Shirtless men, with the taut, tanned bodies of campesinos, stand aimlessly around a campfire without work. These are the refugees of Chiapas.

Eight months after Mexico's Zapatista rebels seized towns across this southern state, more than 1,750 refugees languish in makeshift camps in the towns of Comitán and Las Margaritas. For the most part, their plight has been forgotten by all except the government workers who tend to their needs. The refugees say they fled from the Zapatista-held areas because they didn't agree with the guerrillas' use of force, their politics or their religion. Many of the refugees are evangelical Christians, who have clashed violently with liberal Catholics in Chiapas. Many of them worked for landowners whose ranches have been seized by landless peasants in the eight months since the uprising began on January 1.

Since the revolt, campesinos aligned with groups sympathetic to the Zapatistas have taken 210,000 acres of land in the state from wealthy landowners. The campesinos say they took the land in a frustrated reaction to the central government's termination of Mexico's land-reform program. The government, hamstrung by an uneasy truce with the Zapatistas, has moved slowly to evict the campesinos and has ruled out using the army. Before January's Zapatista revolt, army troops were commonly used to break up campesino protests or land grabs in Chiapas.



A soldier speaks  
with Chiapas  
peasants.

strike by 30,000 shopkeepers in Chiapas that closed down commerce for a day. Hundreds of protesters, organized by the landowners, have camped in front of the state capitol in Tuxtla Gutiérrez since the end of June, demanding government action against the campesinos.

Ironically, most of the protesters are also campesinos, straight from the refugee camps of Comitán and Las Margaritas. "We were invited to participate," says Rosendo Morales, a refugee leader. "We have no work, so why not?" At the protest site in Tuxtla Gutiérrez's town square, the landowners feed the refugees, show them movies on videotape and play popular music as they keep the vigil. Morales says that when the government takes the land back, he hopes his people will get work from the same landowners who are using them now for their political purposes.

One percent of the state's population, about 6,000 families, owns 48 percent of Chiapas' land. For the most part, their corporate farms, ranches and timberlands have avoided redistribution to peasants. In the '80s, while land reform was still active, the Mexican government handed out more than 4,700 exemptions to the program to Chiapas' large landowners, accounting for 95 percent of all exemptions in the program since 1934.

Unaccustomed to having the campesinos battle for property, the landowners have struck back against the current seizures. At the end of July, they organized a

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—Rick Rockwell



continued from page 23

the mothers and families of "the disappeared" and the first woman candidate for president of Mexico in 1982.

After the presidium took its place on stage, a contingent of EZLN soldiers marched before the delegates. The crowd sat in awed silence, watching the soldiers pass by, shaking their heads at the little .22 rifles and ancient shotguns carried by the EZLN troops. What was impressive was certainly not the military might of this outfit but the audacity and imagination of these soldiers who had seized the political initiative from the perfect dictatorship.

If there had been some feeling that Marcos and the EZLN were perhaps a throwback to the communist guerrilla movements of the '70s, that idea was dismissed when Marcos displayed the Mexican flag and then delivered it to Ibarra and the CND. The entire convention then sang the Mexican national anthem.

By the time the CND was adjourned the next day, it had established a structure for a national reform alliance in Mexico. The Zapatistas had succeeded in their goal of forging links between their revolutionary movement and the broad dissident movement throughout the country. The convention's 100-person presidium will continue to meet and coordinate efforts on behalf of the CND agenda.

Ultimately, some may argue that the EZLN's January uprising and the August National Democratic Convention only helped to drive voters into the arms of the PRI, which promised stability and continuity to the country's electorate. But it may yet prove to be the case that the EZLN and the CND have laid the basis for a struggle for a truly democratic Mexico.

Dan La Botz is the author of *Mask of Democracy: Labor Suppression in Mexico Today* (South End Press).

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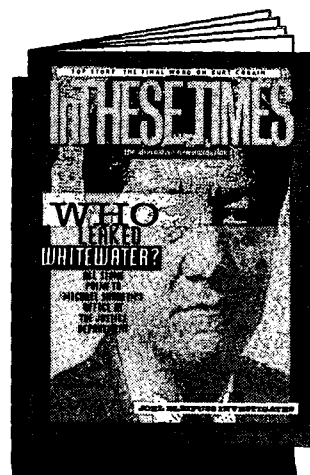
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**POLITICS**

# Straight talk

**H**e is, by all appearances, a candidate without a constituency in a state where constituent politics still matters. He has no natural political base, and has never run for elective office. He has sought the endorsement of hundreds of interest groups—from tiny community organizations to the regular state Democratic organization, the Democratic-Farmer-Labor Party (DFL)—with almost no luck.

*In the Minnesota Democratic primary, Tony Bouza is proving that a politician can tell people things they don't want to hear.*

By Adam Platt  
MINNEAPOLIS

So why do so many people think Tony Bouza will be the next governor of Minnesota?

It's certainly not the packaging. Bouza's rumpled, baggy suits, his confoundingly broad vocabulary (a recent speech had him evoking the Roman general Cincinnatus) and his tendency to lecture his audiences all are enough to give a campaign manager nightmares.

Yet voters seem to like

Bouza—precisely because he's willing to tell them what they don't want to hear. Much has been made of the former Minneapolis police chief's charming wit, his captivating intellect and the eclectic potpourri that makes up his anti-ideology. But fundamentally, what sets the 65-year-old Bouza apart is that he refuses to pander. No matter how hard Bouza is pushed, how many awkward ideological clashes he has with interest groups, he will not water down his beliefs.

For instance, while President Clinton advocates get-tough crime programs such as "three-strikes" mandatory sentencing, Bouza argues that increased incarceration won't work by itself. He contends that the real solution to crime can only be found in addressing the problems of poverty and race. If the growing gap between America's rich and poor remains unchecked, he says, the consequences for the nation—and Minnesota—could be violent and chaotic.

"Our indifference to the plight of the black and poor ... [is] producing the violence we so deplore," he observes. (See *In These Times*, Dec. 27, 1993.)

Despite such against-the-grain positions, polls indicate that Bouza leads his two challengers. His paradoxical appeal is best observed on the Iron Range, an economically depressed mining region in northeastern Minnesota, populated largely by Catholic descendants of Central and Eastern Europeans.

Beyond the liberal inner-city communities of the Minneapolis/St. Paul metro area, the Iron Range is the only region of the state that consistently manages a strong loyal DFL turnout on primary day. But the state DFL endorsed state Sen. John Marty, 37, the son of a prominent Lutheran theologian. Marty also has the enthusiastic support of Sen. Paul Wellstone's grass-roots Wellstone Alliance, a statewide group that promotes liberal candidacies and causes. (See *In These Times*, May 30.)

Yet despite such backing, Marty, who espouses Great Society-style spending programs, has failed to show up on Range radar screens. He is stuck in third place both locally and statewide, and is having trouble raising money.

Attorney Michael Hatch, 45, would also seem to be a likely Range darling. A native of nearby Duluth, and a two-time candidate for governor, Hatch is running a campaign of heavy-handed attacks on Bouza and current Republican Gov. Arne Carlson. In what should bolster his appeal in the Range area, Hatch has made numerous rural economic development promises. Moreover, Hatch has raised more money and done more advertising than any other candidate to date. Still, he's a distant second in the polls, and sparks little enthusiasm among voters.

Early on, Bouza's campaign targeted the Iron Range pri-

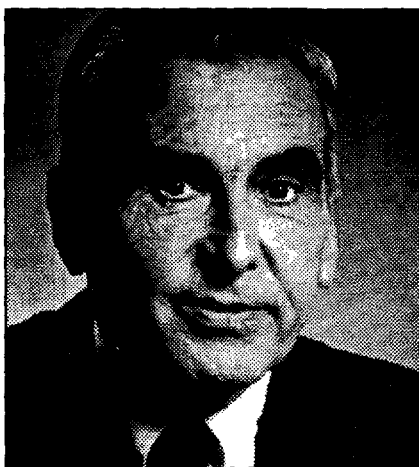
mary vote as crucial. He picked local favorite Kim Stokes—who was Wellstone's northern Minnesota coordinator—to be his lieutenant governor.

Still, Bouza followed up the Stokes selection with a number of perceived gaffes that had analysts fitting nails for his political coffin. For instance, Bouza told the influential Iron Range local of the United Steelworkers union that the state's worker's compensation laws had to be made more business-friendly—prompting hoots and shouts of “*seig heil*” from the crowd. He also admitted to once holding a certain abstract fondness for right-to-work laws.

Likewise, he told the largely anti-abortion Iron Range constituency that abortion had inadvertently but beneficially served to keep the size of the inner-city underclass below cataclysmic levels. And he told this gun-toting region of the state that the nation must have far tighter gun control laws.

After all this, Bouza found himself the candidate to beat in the Iron Range area. “People hear him [Bouza] and just say ‘I like this guy,’ ” says D.J. Leary, a respected political analyst.

Born in El Seijo, Spain, Bouza immigrated to Brooklyn with his family as a teenager. Despite an impoverished childhood and an undistinguished academic career, Bouza rose through the ranks of the New York City police force.



He was considered likely to be its next chief until a 1976 riot near Yankee Stadium, which Bouza blamed on upper- and middle-class ignorance of the plight of the underclass. Bouza quit before he could be fired.

He took over the Minneapolis Police Department in 1980, wresting control of the department from a willful and influential union, which continues to attack Bouza five years after he left the job. He then became state commissioner of gaming, a job he left in 1991 when he convinced the governor to eliminate the department.

Bouza's legislative agenda is focused around addressing the root causes of crime, as well as remaking the state's inequitable property tax-based school funding system, bolstering rural economic/technological development, streamlining layers of municipal and county government and forcing wealthy Twin Cities suburbs to accept affordable housing development.

Yet if Tony Bouza is to win the Minnesota DFL primary on September 13, it will not be single-issue voters that get him there. It will be the long-overdue realization that candidates who refuse to cheapen themselves in the name of getting elected may be worthy of a vote instead of derision. ◀

Adam Platt is a journalist and media critic who lives in St. Paul.

## Far right makes might

**F**our years ago, Minnesota's statewide GOP organization, the Independent-Republicans (I-R), held their nose and issued a late October endorsement of taciturn state Auditor Arne Carlson. This followed the self-destruction of their family-values gubernatorial candidate, Jon Grunseth, in a sex scandal.

The party had rejected the Rockefeller-Republican Carlson in 1990 because he supported women's access to legal abortions. Though Carlson, 59, pulled the tainted I-R fortunes out of the fire that year—winning the governor's office and assembling an administration that even middle-of-the-road Democrats offer grudging praise for—his party again refused to endorse him this summer. Instead, I-R leaders set the stage for a second fratricidal primary race between Carlson and the party's endorsed candidate, former state Rep. Allen Quist, 49.

Carlson's pro-choice stand, along with his refusal to veto a gay rights bill early in his term, cost him the nomination. Party delegates, reflecting the national resurgence of the Christian Right, chose a candidate whose bizarre legislative career was characterized by a preoccupation with sexual morality, homosexuality, AIDS and pornography.

Though Quist distanced himself from that social agenda once he became a candidate for governor, he has been marginalized as a right-wing kook by Carlson, who has likened Quist's religious and moral purity fixations to Adolf Hitler's. Quist has tried to counter the attacks by calling for a massive state tax cut for the middle class.

Carlson has raised a hefty campaign war chest from monied, mainline Republican sources. Money may not be enough to save his fortunes, though. Carlson is plagued by a hypersensitivity to criticism and a supercilious manner that inhibits his ability to connect with the average voter.

State political analysts believe Quist voters will be more motivated on primary day, while Carlson supporters fear that DFL primary voters will cross over to vote for Quist, perceived to be easy DFL picking in the general election.

“We just aren't able to gauge the depth of support Quist has,” says political analyst D.J. Leary, who believes Quist's sexual morality crusades resonate in a rural Minnesota frightened by the spread of urban values. “There's a feeling that this anti-gay issue is bubbling up to replace abortion. And if that's true, then Quist may get a much more sympathetic hearing than most people think.”

—A.P.



## CONGRESS

## Dead on arrival

**T**

his was supposed to be the magical moment, the time when the United States finally joined the ranks of other industrialized countries with a comprehensive national health insurance system. As the summer fades, however, the prospects for any health care bill passing Congress this year seem dim. What's more, the most likely legislation may actually leave many people worse off, while only marginally helping a few. And legislative support for meaningful reform will almost certainly diminish as the Republicans gain seats in November's congressional elections.

How did this dismal situation come to pass?

Initially, the political opportunity to reform the American health care system was generated by the irrationality of the system itself. Burgeoning hospital bureaucracies and absurdly bloated insurance companies both contributed to out-of-control medical costs. This swelled the

ranks of people who were not covered and increased the insecurity of everyone else. As costs went up, there was a wholesale scramble to shift expenses. Insurance companies "cherry picked" healthy clients. Employers reduced coverage or increased costs to their employees. Government tried to limit its own payments. New forms of "managed care" tried to deny patients care and to micro-manage doctors.

With the perception that the medical system was in crisis, many Americans appeared ready to embrace serious reform. After Harris Wofford made health care reform the centerpiece of his 1991 Pennsylvania Senate race—and engineered a stunning upset—the issue seized the imagination of politicians, including Bill Clinton. At first nobody, not even business, medical and insurance lobbies, seemed opposed to reform or willing to argue that there was no crisis.

The simplest, most effective solution was—and still is—a government single-payer insurance system covering everyone and financed by progressive taxes. But the Clinton administration dismissed single-payer as a plan too vulnerable to Republican attacks on "big government" and taxes. Instead, Hillary Rodham Clinton's health care task force produced a complex plan for universal coverage—fashioned largely behind closed doors—that offered obtuse controls on waste and costs. This plan was designed to invoke hallowed free-market incentives, though there is ample evidence that such markets don't work well for health care.

The administration's political calculus was made against the backdrop of Reagan and Bush attacks on public sector inefficiency. But instead of directly countering those attacks, President Clinton attempted to accommodate corporations and the conservative, anti-government temper of many Americans. By doing so, he hoped to forge a coalition that would divide the historic forces of opposition to health care reform.

It didn't work. Small-business lobbyists and medium-sized insurers formed the core of the special interest opposition. But as the assault developed, more and more business, medical and insurance groups coalesced around attacks on the administration's reform package. Businesses united even though most big corporations (and those small firms that already provide health insurance) would have gained under the Clinton plan. But business has always been more ideologically cohesive than ordinary citizens. (See "The First Stone," page 12.)

After Clinton announced his plan last fall, the attack escalated and Clinton—distracted by NAFTA, foreign crises and Whitewater—dropped the ball. There was no sustained, high-profile campaign for his plan, which never generated much popular support, in large part because it was so confusing to most people. This made the attacks seem more plausible. And despite potshots at insurance and pharma-

*A series  
of self-inflicted  
wounds helped  
cripple  
Clinton's  
health care  
reform plans.*

By David Moberg

ceutical companies, the president did not identify a clear enemy—and thus lost a key advantage in mobilizing support. The administration needed a tough grass-roots campaign to counter conservative and small-business campaigns. It never really materialized.

Republicans, having largely shed their one-time moderate faction, never offered much hope for support. Democrats in Congress were divided and confused, still shellshocked from the Reagan-Bush era. Like Clinton, with his “new Democrat” stance, many were looking for a way to repudiate the party’s past claims to use government for the little guy. Rep. Jim Cooper (D-TN) skillfully cultivated the press with his free-market alternative to Clinton while collecting \$540,000 in contributions from health and insurance interests—more than double the next highest congressional beneficiary.

The huge outpouring of industry money tipped the scales. Health and insurance industries have spent \$26 million on campaign contributions to members of Congress so far in this election cycle, a 40 percent increase from the previous cycle, according to a new study from Citizen Action. Citizen Action reported that senators opposed to substantial health care reform received on average \$200,000 more in campaign contributions from the health and insurance industries than did strong reformers. The Center for Public Integrity, in another recent study, reported that health industry interests had hired nearly 100 lobbying firms and will spend more than \$50 million on ads.

Citizen groups advocating reform never completely coalesced around a clear-cut strategy, thus making it difficult to drum up support for anything beyond broad principles. As public confusion about health reform grew, it became harder for advocates to campaign for health care. Overall public support for universal coverage, employer mandates and some other strong reform elements has remained high. Yet the sense of urgency has declined: the improving economy seems to have reduced public anxiety somewhat, and the slowdown in health care inflation has reduced employer concerns.

The shift toward managed care—which increasingly means big insurers organizing networks of preferred providers or establishing health maintenance organizations—is likely to flourish whatever the outcome of legislation in Congress. California, the capital of managed care, suggests the shape the future fight over the corporatization of health care is likely to take.

Many doctors and patients are in revolt against the cost-cutting strategies of managed-care corporations. Last spring the conservative California Medical Association (CMA) nearly decided to endorse a single-payer approach; the CMA eventually settled on a compromise measure to study the feasibility of single-payer. CMA spokesperson Danielle Walters says there is growing frustration within the group over “disturbing trends” in for-profit managed care. Walters says managed-care companies are charging excessive administrative fees to ensure high profits, while there is “anecdotal evidence of denial of care and hassles of physi-

cians ... and of routine benefits and services for patients being ratcheted down.”

Proponents of a statewide initiative for a single-payer system that will be on the California ballot in November are frontally attacking the insurance companies. “Our basic message is that people are paying for great health care but not getting it because insurance companies are diverting nearly 30 cents of every dollar to things other than health care,” argues Glen Schneider, chair of the pro-single-payer Campaign for Health Security (CHS).

Though the CHS’ proposal covers everyone, the group’s campaign focuses on middle-class concerns about cost and quality of care. “Clinton fell into the classic liberal trap of taxing the middle class to help the poor,” Schneider says. “He could have had this message, but he wasn’t willing to fight. We are.” But the biggest obstacle single-payer proponents face is voter distrust of government. As Schneider notes: “I’ve seen people on Medicare with government pensions who’ve worked for the military all their lives say, ‘Tell me something government has ever done right.’”

Attempts to allay fears of “socialized medicine” in Washington have not worked. Though Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell’s compromise bill is weak and ineffective, Republicans are still assaulting his plan with the same arguments that would have been used against a stronger bill, insisting that it promotes big government, more taxes and socialism. All of Clinton’s compromises have gained nothing in political feasibility and lost much in popular appeal.

Despite the shortcomings of the president’s strategy, a bolder approach would have been a long shot, given the array of opponents and the condition of Congress. This battle for health care reform reveals what far-reaching political changes may be needed as a prelude to victory on health care or on many other important reforms. First, there’s the need for drastic reform of campaign financing. Also, citizen groups, labor and the Democratic Party itself need to develop much stronger, more meaningful grass-roots organizing efforts. Presently, the right does better in mobilizing both money and people. Finally, the left—in this broad sense—cannot avoid an ideological battle with the right.

Progressives must begin focusing on the failings of big corporations and the market while defending the virtues of government. To his credit, Sen. Edward Kennedy (D-MA) argued forcefully in the Senate debate on health care that the government is needed to maintain a social compact guaranteeing everyone a sense of security and decency. This need not mean repudiating the market, and it certainly entails making government more effective and responsive.

Unfortunately, it’s unlikely that health care reform that preserves a positive government role will come out of Washington, even if some kind of legislation is eventually passed. Ironically, this imminent failure results not from the inherent limitations of the public sector, but from the attacks of those who maintain—with the force of self-fulfilling prophecy—that the American government can do no good.

## VIEWPOINT

# Beanballs

By Ed Garvey

**P**olitics used to be fun. It was a better game than baseball because in politics you never knew who would win, whereas in baseball the Yankees used to win almost every year. And politics was played within the foul lines for the most part. Yes, Joe McCarthy and other demagogues hit plenty of fouls and, for a while, got to first and even second base. But the bums were ultimately thrown out. Joseph Welch and Joe Rauh and other voices of decency picked them off with a move to first so smooth that they never saw it coming.

Anyone could play the political game. We were not observers; we were participants who could affect the outcome of the game. Ah, but money took the place of volunteers, 30-second spots replaced substance, and now 20 percent of the Congress voluntarily reports to be millionaires.

Even foreign policy had more at stake than baseball in the old days. Who would win the great ideological war? Would the Soviets expand, would the communists gain in Italy or France or South Africa? How

many speeches could we give that proved we were the humane, God-fearing nation and that they were the atheistic totalitarians?

But the bums quit! They took a dive. They jumped out of the ring just as we were about to knock 'em out. Now the only competition for the reigning champs are the flyweight baseball-team-owners-in-training in Haiti.

So, with the communists on the injured reserve list, and congressional incumbents playing the role of the old

*A veteran of  
sports labor battles  
throws brushback  
pitches at baseball's  
owners, the press,  
the politicians  
and the fans.*

Yankees, what is left to watch? You guessed it, baseball. And now that's gone, too, and we're angry as hell. Doesn't it just infuriate us that those players want to preserve their collectively bargained gains in the face of owner demands for givebacks? Hell, if the United Auto Workers can give away the store, why not the baseball players? And who says they are worthy of union status anyway? Most are probably Republicans!

And what about guys like Yankee owner George Steinbrenner? How dare he treat the players the way he treats his business partners and the other owners! Imagine, greed in baseball in a nation of Lee Iacoccas, Roger Smiths, Briggs and Strattons, John Georges, Exxons and Blue Cross bureaucrats! Why, it is downright discouraging. Where is Bill Clinton when we need him? What's that? Clinton is at a fund-raiser with Tommy Boggs and Ron Brown and Donald Tyson? Oh well.

And, while "greedy" baseball players try to keep their gains, and "greedy" owners try to bust the union, we condemn them both—and, in our obsession with the strike, we ignore the plight of 4,000 breadwinners on the Soo Line Railroad. These are Midwestern workers fighting for their economic lives in a strike against a brutal Steinbrenner-like multinational called Canadian Pacific. Good old CP is not greedy—it's just trying to bust the union, pay less than American competitors and jeopardize the safety of the workers. But that, my friends, is part of the American dream. Our real pastime is watching people make money off the backs of others and calling it "profit-maximizing."

Ah, but the sport of profit maximizing is the private preserve of those in charge. There are no umpires, no fans to pass judgment. And the press? Well, the journalists are too busy



watching baseball not get played, and worrying about the vendors. Have you ever read so many stories about the downtrodden vendor who will go broke if the strike lasts for more than a month? Could it possibly be that the owners of these teams treat vendors the same way they treated ballplayers before the days of players association organizer Marvin Miller?

Is there a way out of the strike? Of course there's a way out. Just have

Congress vote to give the owners until next Monday at midnight to agree to share all revenues equally. That means you, Steinbrenner: take the \$50 million from TV and put it in the pot. If you don't, you lose your antitrust exemption at 12:01. Simple.

Then we wake up acting baseball commissioner Bud Selig and tell him: "Bud, put 58 percent of your gross (which is what the players now get) in a bank. Call the players association

and tell them to pick it up and work out their own pay plan. Whatever they do with it is their business, whatever we do with our 42 percent is our business." Voila! The strike is over and the fun begins.

Now, how do we fix our political game? Tune in next season.

Ed Garvey is the former head of the NFL Players Association. He is currently president of Labor Strategies, Inc., a union consulting firm in Madison, Wis.



# I N T H E A R T S

## Let it bleed

# W

**Oliver Stone  
goes right  
for the  
jugular in  
Natural Born  
Killers.**

By Pat Dowell

When Oliver Stone's *Heaven and Earth* opened last year, it looked as if the director of *Salvador*, *Platoon* and *JFK* had finally lost his touch for dredging our worst nightmares out of the American psyche. *Heaven on Earth* was the last thing you'd expect from Stone—a movie so undistinguished there was nothing much in it to talk about.

Well, not to worry. Stone has come roaring and bellowing back with *Natural Born Killers*. His first comedy—a blood-curdling comedy, mind you—it follows an outlaw couple named Mickey and Mallory Knox on a murderous road trip. In retrospect, it would appear that *Heaven on Earth* was so dull because Stone was preoccupied with packing everything he could say about violence and celebrity into *Natural Born Killers*.

Like *JFK*, *Natural Born*

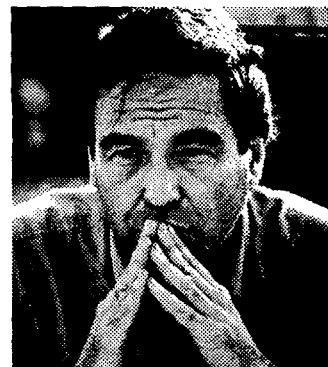
*Killers*—which Stone co-wrote from a story by Quentin Tarantino of *Reservoir Dogs* fame—is a firestorm of images. Stone uses all the different formats that Americans encounter every day on television, in the movies, on billboards, in magazines and in newspapers. Consider just the opening scene, which depicts the slaughter of the not-so-innocent in a roadside diner by our “heroes” Mickey and Mallory (Woody Harrelson and Juliette Lewis, both superb). Some shots are in color, some in grainy black-and-white, and several are crazily canted about 30 degrees off the horizontal. One character sitting in a booth dissolves before our eyes, and we see newspaper headlines and television images, as the sequence bursts into a bloody mess of gunshots, beatings and knifings. As the movie goes on, it incorporates underground comic-style superheroes, words projected onto people's bodies, and old movies, some of which turn out to be characters' dreams or memories.

There are several dead-on parody scenes from a barely fictional tabloid television crime show called *American Maniacs*. Stone presents Mallory's memories of her first meeting with Mickey as an episode from an obscene television sitcom dubbed *I Love Mallory*. It stars Rodney Dangerfield as Lewis' incestuous dad. *Natural Born Killers* climaxes with a prison riot that conjures up and mocks (and tops) every middle-class fear about demonic criminals and the hellhole of cellblock life.

Mickey and Mallory, those charismatic psychopaths, spring from a long line of lovers on the run in American movies, stretching back to the Depression, when Henry Fonda and Sylvia Sydney played doomed working-class fugitives in *You Only Live Once*. Directors have used this formula to comment on many things about America, nearly always celebrating an anarchic impulse to defy authority, and Stone follows this tradition.

Mickey and Mallory's world is hostile to lovers, to innocence, to the poor, and especially to the young. But what really drives Stone's movie is the culture's love of death, an infatuation denied continually by hypocritical enforcers (cops, prison wardens, parents, media pundits) who indulge their own sadistic impulses.

The movie is chock-full of nuts in a position to do real bodily harm. Not only Mallory's loutish father, who



PHOTOS ©WARNER BROTHERS

**Natural Born Killers**  
Directed by Oliver Stone

rapes her and beats her mother (the hysterically impotent Edie McClurg), but also the supercop Scagnetti (Tom Sizemore), who strangles a prostitute, and, above all, the prison warden Dwight McClusky (one of the all-time great Tommy Lee Jones performances).

McClusky, attired in a greasy plaid suit, with pencil-thin mustache and the perpetual willies, is always ready with his nose-pliers to subdue an unruly inmate. He is a figure of ridiculous but real menace. It is he, in the movie's apocalyptic second half, set entirely in the prison where Mickey and Mallory have landed after their capture, who decides to commission Scagnetti to kill the troublesome couple while transporting them to a hospital for the criminally insane.

This plan collides with McClusky's wholly natural susceptibility to the blandishments of Wayne Gale, the Aussie television host of *American Maniacs*, a show that profiles serial killers. Gale is the antichrist of Stone's movie (payback time for JFK's crucifixion by the media?). He is even depicted with horns in the demon gallery that periodically erupts onto the screen in a succession of quicksilver images of monsters, like a reminder of what's just outside the action egging it on.

In the role of Gale, Robert Downey Jr. capitalizes on the little-used scary side of his persona, tantalizingly glimpsed in the casually conscienceless makeup artist he played in Robert Altman's *Short Cuts*. Downey plays Gale broadly and with gusto, but it is a weakness of *Natural Born Killers* that the movie spends so much ammunition mowing down such an easy media target. The real Aussie host of that actual tabloid news show, whom Downey imitates so well, will no doubt milk every drop of publicity he can from *Natural Born Killers*. If he could feel embarrassment, after all, he'd have died of it 10 years ago.

There are obvious pitfalls in making a furious avalanche of a movie like this one: that it will be overtaken by the absurdities of real life, that it will be received as just another media artifact exploiting America's love of violence and that it will embody what it denounces. *Natural Born Killers* is unremittingly bloody; Stone makes no concession whatsoever to the current (and often misguided) crusade against depictions of brutality.

He seems to be aware of the potential for mistaken self-righteousness. As if to say mea too culpa, he includes some shots of his own exploitive work among the staccato, stiletto, blink-of-an-eye clips from other movies that punctuate

the scenes. Identifiable are scenes from violent movies for which he wrote screenplays—Brian De Palma's *Scarface* and the prison movie that won Stone a writer's Oscar, *Midnight Express*. He doesn't go so far as to include anything he directed, however.

Yet despite its satirical edge, many people *will* go see *Natural Born Killers* to revel in its kinetic flesh-rendering and



cruelty. Let's face it, many people don't know a parody when they see one, and many others *just don't care* what is meant by an image—as long as they can use it to get the kicks they need.

*Natural Born Killers* is an exhilarating change of pace from the drab stagecraft of most Hollywood productions. It has potency, even if its message is just a little bit obvious. I think Americans are aware that we are in the throes of media madness and bloodlust. *Natural Born Killers* is not news, but it is yet another movie in which Oliver Stone captures a cultural moment in America in a terrifying freeze-frame. Nobody does it better.



# Stupid capitalism tricks

**Michael Moore  
brings a  
little bit of  
anarchy to  
TV's endless  
summer.**

By Scott McLemee

**T**hroughout the summer, even more than during the rest of the year, television is a vast wasteland: a dry and stony place, a graveyard in the desert, where no living thing may find sustenance, where time stands still, frozen in a barren tableau of endless repetition, of eternal return. I mean, it's rerun season.

A few shows make their debut in the summer schedule, of course—but even these are recycled. Each year the networks option dozens of new series. Most are rejected. They hang in limbo until the summer season, when a handful get one final chance at airtime before total oblivion. After a few weeks these shows typically disappear; they are buried unmourned and without ceremony.

But occasionally something odd does happen. A program of real originality, too risky for prime advertis-

ing, makes its way into the summer line-up. A dozen years ago, for instance, *Police Squad!* got on the air. With its hysterical, absurdist humor—built around the most sophomoric verbal and visual puns imaginable—*Police Squad!* marked the first appearance of Leslie Nielsen as Lt. Frank Dreben, the detective without a clue, now familiar from the *Naked Gun* movies. The show was canceled after a six-week run, but became a legend.

This summer's *TV Nation* may inspire a similar cult following. Created and hosted by Michael Moore (the “me” of *Roger and Me*), it shares with *Police Squad!* a sense of humor from someplace far out in left field. Its humor also comes out of the left wing: corporate executives, white supremacists, prisons and the health care system are central targets. A magazine-format show along the lines of *60 Minutes*, it renders “talking head” segments both very funny and, at times, scathingly political.

The basic technique of the show recalls *Roger and Me*. Put celebrities, executives and government officials in front of a camera. Get them to explain what they do, how they think and the probable impact of their activity on the public. That provides more than enough rope for the worst offenders to hang themselves.

At its best, the show owes as much to the personalities of the interviewers as to the topics being reported. This is especially true of Louis Theroux, a mildly pixilated Englishman whose segments have been among the funniest and most memorable things on the show. Theroux's deadpan style and affable manner prove especially effective when interviewing people who, with anyone else, might quickly become hostile.

Consider, for example, his encounter with some white-supremacist religious nuts who believe that *Star Trek* contains important theological truths. Following an apocalyptic race war, they explain, all non-whites will be transported to other planets. The Earth will be left for the Aryans. Theroux listens quietly, then, with a tone of utter sincerity, asks: “Now the planet the black people will get—will it be better than the white people's planet, about the same, or not quite as good?”

“Well, it will be their original homeland....”

“But I mean in terms of facilities.”

“It's whatever they make it.”

“So they could make it as nice as they want?”

“Exactly.”

The interviewer poses a hypothetical situation: “What about if there are white people on Earth and Earth's not doing so well. And they see the black people have done a good job on their planet. Would they be able to emigrate?”

“No,” comes the firm answer. “There's no interracial mixing. No.”

Somehow, the exchange transpired in perfect calm, without so much as a hint of sarcasm in Theroux's voice. The racists never got upset. Yet it seems a safe bet that the scenario of earthbound Aryans jealous of a black planet had never crossed their minds.

Large stretches of the show have been given over to exercises in sheer goofiness. Merrill Markoe reported on the use of Prozac for emotionally disturbed pets, such as a dog with an obsessive-compulsive fixation on a log. ("Willie has to look at his log, stay with his log," says his owner. "He doesn't see the big picture.") Another regular, MTV's Karen Duffy, went to North Dakota to find out why it draws fewer tourists than any other state in the union. (Answer: it's too damn cold, and there's nothing to do.) A recurring feature, the *TV Nation* poll, presents meaningless statistics: "16 percent of Perot voters believe 'if dolphins were really smart, they could get out of those nets.'"

Much of the humor and the bite in *TV Nation* comes from Michael Moore's sensibility, particularly his political outrage and his sense of the grotesque. The show's opening—a hyperkinetic montage of stock footage and commercials from the '50s and early '60s—evokes that spirit of blue-collar optimism of a bygone era that one saw so utterly eroded by deindustrialization in *Roger and Me*. And both the documentary and the TV program belong to a distinctive genre one might call "investigative satire."

Why, then, are Moore's appearances on the show so often tiresome? In *Roger and Me*—pestering corporate executives in his "I'm Out for Trout" cap—Moore made a convincing Everyman figure. But as a TV host, he often comes across as David Letterman in proletarian drag. Moore's segments often lumber on far too long. Evidently he thinks—as does Letterman—that beating viewers repeatedly with some lame schtick will eventually clobber them into hilarity. The idea of lobbying Congress to establish "TV Nation Day" was mildly amusing, for about 30 seconds. It's become a running gag.

The worst case was Moore's excruciating segment on Bosnia. He visited Serbian and Croatian representatives at their embassies in Washington—trying, about as successfully as you would expect, to get them to make peace. Then, using a pizza, he got someone to explain the divisions of the former Yugoslavia. Finally, Moore tried to get the Serbs and Croats to join him in a round of the insipid Barney theme song—"I love you, you love me..." Smiling and confused, the diplomats faked their way through a verse. Meanwhile, the screen flashed statistics on rape, murder and refugees in Bosnia.

"Such a fine line, sometimes, between clever and stupid," as the bass player in *Spinal Tap* put it in another context. Moore's stunt—what other word describes it?—certainly crossed the line from cynical humor into the morally cretinous. But satire must take that risk. The genre is often driven by bitterness of an almost delirious sort, lapsing at times into cruelty. The greater danger the show



faces—and, I think, usually surmounts—comes from its status as left-wing commentary: namely, the threat of didacticism, the old radical impulse to preach and teach.

*T.V. Nation*  
Directed by Michael Moore

Here Moore's sense of the ludicrous saves the show. A report on Avon ladies selling cosmetics to peasant women in Brazil is worth more, in terms of real political impact on public consciousness, than an equivalent period of time in any Marxist-feminist post-colonial theory seminar at some cultural studies conference.

*TV Nation* is funny enough, often enough, to make up for the occasional witless imitations of Letterman and other such lapses of judgment. Seldom does a program this quirky make it to prime time. Soon enough we will be treated to the fall harvest of cop shows, cutesy-clever teens and soap operas—as well as a mini-series or two about the O.J. Simpson trial. And we'll begin to sympathize with the 29 percent of Americans who believe, as a *TV Nation* poll reported, that "Elvis was right to shoot television sets." ◀

Scott McLemee writes regularly on culture for *In These Times*.

# I N P R I N T

## The right, stuffed

By David Futrelle

Casual observers of politics might be forgiven for thinking that American conservatism, a decade after the heights of Reaganite glory, is enjoying a robust renaissance as America's new adversary culture. Rush Limbaugh lectures daily to an audience of some 20 million; Noam Chomsky can't even get on *Nightline*. R. Emmett Tyrell's pugnaciously reactionary *The American Spectator* sells more copies than *In These Times*, *The Nation* and *The New Republic* combined, tormenting the befuddled Clinton administration with rumors, innuendo and accusations of raving leftism. (Alas, they're wrong on this last point.) Hawkers of anti-Clinton paraphernalia are doing a brisk mail-order business—selling a variety of semi-humorous products from the much-advertised "Clinton backwards-running watch" to bumper stickers emblazoned with slogans such as "Where is Lee Harvey Oswald When You Need Him?" The Christian Right is building up what *New Yorker* correspondent Sidney Blumenthal describes as "a large alternative culture that includes schools, institutes, newspapers, magazines, radio and television stations, and thousands of politically mobilized churches."

For David Frum, a conservative columnist for *Forbes* magazine and the author of the polemical *Dead Right*, none of this matters. American conservatism is dead, he suggests, because it has lost its principles. In the good old days, conservatism rested on two central tenets: hatred of communism and hatred of big government. Now with the communist bogey gone, anticommunism is more or less obsolete. Even worse, Frum suggests, conservatives have lost the will to challenge the welfare state.

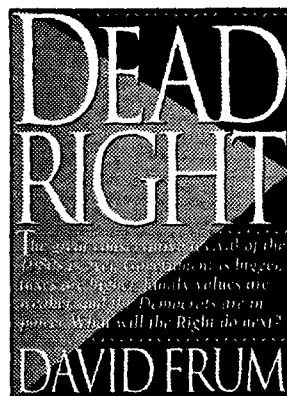
Devoid of its central *raison d'être*, Frum argues, contemporary conservatism has degenerated into three warring sects, all more given to posturing for the cameras than promoting real change. Whether optimists (like Jack Kemp), moralists (like former drug czar and freelance sermonizer Bill Bennett) or nationalists (like the blustering Pat Buchanan), conservatives have lost interest in keeping government small. Kemp's crime, in Frum's eyes, is that he has lost faith in the moral power of the market, promoting artificially generated "market" mechanisms (incentives and disincentives) to work a kind of social engineering on the poor. Both the moralists and the nationalists have lost interest in economics altogether, preferring to do battle instead

on the terrain of culture, enlisting the coercive power of the government to help them in their various crusades—against drugs, immigrants, the underclass and so on.

Lucidly written, energetically argumentative without being shrill, this is a book designed to get attention. Frum is such a compelling writer that one forgets, at times, how specious his central argument really is. For Frum, the essence of capitalism is risk, and the foremost danger of both liberalism and "big government conservatism" is that it attempts to shield the average citizen from such risk. "The nearly \$1 trillion the federal government spends each year on social services and income maintenance—and the additional hundreds of billions spent by the states—is a colossal lure tempting citizens to reckless behavior," he writes. "Big government does for the 98 percent of society that is not rich what her millions did for the late Barbara Hutton—it enables them to engage in destructive behavior without immediately suffering the consequences."

Frum presents no evidence that any of these assertions are true—which is not surprising, since there is no such evidence. Risk may make some circumspect; but it is likely to make others even more reckless, even nihilistic. It seems almost pointless to attempt to rebut Frum with logic, though, because for Frum the notion of the morality of risk takes on an almost religious certainty.

And so Frum ends his book with precisely the same kind of self-righteous self-congratulation that he so effectively critiques in others. The lesson of *Dead Right* is simple: conservative intellectuals need to abandon their crowd-pleasing, careerist opportunism (as well as their excessive concern with Republican electoral politics) "and do what intellectuals of all descriptions are obliged to do: practice honesty, and pay the price." Frum (a moralist in spite of himself) thus sets himself up as a prophet of sorts, willing to deliver the harsh truths that no one wants to hear.



**Dead Right**  
By David Frum  
Basic Books (A New  
Republic Book)  
230 pp., \$23

Of course, even the most crowd-pleasing conservatives have more backbone than the current crop of post-ideological liberals, who are devoted to an elusive "consensus" that means only endless compromise. Clinton is a consummate people pleaser, but there's no pleasing Rush Limbaugh. And that's precisely the point. Limbaugh may be as much an entertainer as an ideologue, but he *does* stand up for his beliefs, and his fans admire him all the more for it. He may at times play to the crowd, but at least he has a crowd to play to. Frum could learn a thing or two from him—as could we. ◀



# C L A S S I F I E D S

## ▶ HELP WANTED

The Washington Toxics Coalition, a progressive, non-profit environmental organization, is looking for an ORGANIZATIONAL DIRECTOR. Qualifications required: excellent written and verbal communication skills; extensive fundraising background including membership development and grant-writing experience; media and marketing experience; and facilitation and coordination skills. Must have 3-5 years relevant job experience. For job description and application, contact: OD Job Search, WTC, 4516 University Way NE, Seattle, WA 98105. (202) 632-1545. Women and people of color strongly encouraged to apply.

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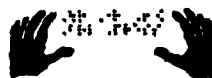
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Continued from page 40

have stoked his fires, but her own movements to dislodge him had done so. It was there in the intense smoldering of his grey eyes, and in what she could feel hardening near the apex of her thighs. In a panic, she got out, "Recall that you hate me!" just before his mouth closed on hers."

Some version of this scene is found in all gothics, or all good ones anyway. The secret of the form, which I quickly learned as a horny teenager, is that the One Thing that these books are obsessed with isn't sex per se. It's *conflict*, specifically women's conflict between the safety of chastity and the dangers of sexual fulfillment.

In their perpetual reworkings of this theme, their shameless wish-fulfillment, romances cater to women's obsessions without making even token obeisance to the standards of literature. For that they must be, if not stamped out, then *mocked* out of existence. Women indulge in this mockery with even more ferocity than men—it's a symbolic rejection, not just of bad literature, but of feminine weakness.

Because at some point we've *all* endured a dose of embarrassment for doing what comes naturally to us as women. Even the blameless few who dress entirely in taupe and read only *The New York Review of Books* most likely have big hair and *Young Miss* magazine somewhere in their past. "Reading the diary I kept as a teenager is now excruciating," media critic Susan Douglas has noted, "so mortifying that, if anyone else were to find it, I think I would blind myself with hot coals or simply commit hari-kari."

Douglas' mortification is familiar to feminists. From the radical feminist screeds of the '70s to Susan Faludi's 1992 bestseller *Backlash*, traditional feminism has offered a fairly homogeneous take on both the problem and its solution. Women are the victims of the nefarious media, this feminism explains, brainwashed into "eroticizing our subordination." The only way to escape from bimboism is to burn *Vogue* and *Love's Tender Trap*, eschewing heels, lipstick and shaving in favor of Birkenstocks and a flannel shirt.

But lately we've been hearing another answer to the bimbo question, one that sounds something like "Who Cares?" Earlier this year, *Esquire* magazine explored this trend in a tribute to a group of pretty and potent women, including Susie Bright, Mary Gaitskill and Naomi Wolf, whom the editors believe exemplify something called "Do-Me Feminism." As such a phrase might suggest, the piece is little more than a chop-licking paean to sexual openness. Slightly closer to the mark in summing up the new feminism is a slogan that Wolf appropriates from Nike in her book *Fire With Fire*: "Just Do It." Wolf uses "Just Do It" as a motivational mantra, but it can also function as an exhortation not to sweat the small stuff. If you like to read Harlequins, paint your toenails pink, or get spanked, don't worry about it—just do it.

There's a problem, of course, with this kind of feminist reclaiming; it's hard to tell when you've stopped doing politics and begun cheerfully imbibing pop culture under the gloss of empowerment. Feminist anger can begin to seem

tacky, a boring encumbrance to the radiant picture of bold, strong women who freely choose to be housewives or Playboy bunnies. And when it's taken too far, feminist optimism drains away the capacity to condemn very real problems such as sexual harassment and date rape. To support her flimsy thesis that the late '80s saw America undergoing a "genderquake," Wolf actually spins the Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas hearings as a process that "free[d] locked-up energy" and "performed ... alchemy on the aura of patriarchy."

Still, the importance of these issues shouldn't keep us from claiming the freedom to enjoy the things that give us pleasure without letting anyone—even other feminists—make us feel like helpless dupes. What matters more than placing cultural forms on one side or another of some political dividing line is taking charge of them ourselves: using them freely when they bring us joy, tossing them out when they don't. As feminist theorist Ann Snitow puts it, "in matters of popular culture, we are not what we eat."

When it comes to my own personal brand of junk food, of course, this is easier said than done. I'm sure I colored a little as I paid for *Surrender My Love*, keeping my eyes low and muttering that it was for "research purposes." But once I got it home, feminist empowerment was no problem. Curled in my bed, I giggled with delight as "she savored the taste and feel of him pressed along her length" and "his hand came to rest between her thighs"—flushing maybe, but not blushing.

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## I N T H E E N D

## "Recall that you hate me!"

By Etelka Lehoczky

**T**hough I wouldn't care to think of myself as a habitu  of the gothic romance section of the bookstore—maybe an occasional visitor, or even a dallier, but certainly not someone with any sort of *compulsion* in that direction—I couldn't help but notice that Johanna Lindsey has a new book out. This was purely by chance, mind you. I just happened to pass by on my way from psychology to women's history, so I paused for a minute to thumb through *Surrender My Love*—though not without glancing surreptitiously around to make sure no one else was in the aisle.

Let's face it, lingering in front of the "historical" section—that wall of fat spines glowing rose, gold and blue, decorated with scrolling gilded type, punctuated by the sweaty clasps of shirtless and sometimes even breechless (!) heroes and ample, unfurled heroines—could be, well, incriminating. Unlike the slender, pastel Harlequin and Silhouette romances, these books make no attempt to be discreet. Reading them vaults me back to the tentative libidinal forays of my adolescence, and I taste again that unique sense of shame that accompanies the acquiring of forbidden knowledge. At 13, I wanted information that the gothics could deliver; they virtually screamed—to me and, I thought then, to everyone else in the bookstore—that they were about Just One Thing.

These days the anxiety is of rather the opposite kind. Though I exhibit perfect sang-froid while perusing de Sade or the lesbian porn magazine *On Our Backs*, I can barely bring myself to browse through a genre that is so universally dis-



missed as trash. There's a reason that romances are sold in grocery stores, and it's not just because they're marketed mainly to That Kind Of Woman, the disempowered prole who never enters a bookstore. It's easier for anyone to contemplate such an embarrassing purchase when not loomed over by stacks of more serious stuff.

I finally picked up a copy of *Surrender My Love* at Walgreen's. Aside from a trendy emphasis on bondage and spanking, it's virtually indistinguishable from any of Lindsey's 27 other books. "Wrongly branded a spy, the dark and handsome Viking lord Selig Haardrad suffered greatly in the dungeons of Lady Erika of Gronwood," the back-cover copy breathlessly explains. "And as he hung in chains, his magnificent body wracked with pain and

fever, one thought sustained him: revenge!"

Of course, that's only in the first 100 pages or so. Selig's sister Kristen, whose romance with Royce of Wyndhurst was chronicled in the earlier *Hearts Aflame*, promptly rescues Selig and captures Erika. Back at the keep, Selig humiliates Erika in various ways. Most memorably, he makes her bathe while he watches, and sleep in a corner of his bedroom on the floor.

It doesn't take long for the eruption of one of those classic hate-vs.-desire scenes that are the marrow of this genre. When Selig tries to force Erika to walk, naked and chained, down to the dining hall, she bites him on the leg and he tackles her: "Lying on top of a naked woman might not

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